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ABSTRACT

The series of ten instructional modules is designed for the training of graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in college-level second language instruction. The modules are written by authors with a professional interest in the professional preparation of teachers who are experienced in the design and preparation of materials for language teaching. The authors assume a generally communicative approach, and call on the TAs to reflect on their own teaching experiences. Modules include: "Beyond TA Training: Developing a Reflective Approach to a Career in Language Education" (Celeste Kinginger); "Research and Language Learning: A Tour of the Horizon" (Ken Sheppard); "Teaching Learning Strategies to Language Students" (Anna Uhl Chamot); "Alternative Assessment in the Language Classroom" (Diane J. Tedick, Carol A. Klee); "Grammar in the Foreign Language Classroom: Making Principled Choices" (Patricia Byrd); "Listening in a Foreign Language" (Ana Maria Schwartz); "Spoken Language: What It Is and How To Teach It" (Grace S. Burkart); "Reading in the Beginning and Intermediate College Foreign Language Class" (Heidi Byrnes); "Writing in the Foreign Language Curriculum: Soup and (Fire)crackers" (Diane Musumeci); and "The Teaching of Culture in Foreign Language Courses" (Dale L. Lange). (MSE)

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Modules for the Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

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Modules for the Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Edited by
Grace Stovall Burkart
Center for Applied Linguistics

Abstracts of Modules

Celeste Kinginger
Beyond TA Training: Developing a Reflective Approach to a Career in Language Education

The Teaching Assistant (TA) is an apprentice embarking upon a career in foreign language education. TA as student and as teacher. Four views of language education. The reflective practice model of professional development. The teaching portfolio as documentation of long-term development. First steps in developing a professional profile.

Ken Sheppard
Research and Language Learning: A Tour of the Horizon

Summary of research in second language acquisition that focuses on four issues that bear directly on the teaching of foreign languages in university settings. What is a foreign language? What do we know about learners? What does the process of language learning look like? What can the classroom contribute?

Anna Uhl Chamot
Teaching Learning Strategies to Language Students

Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that students can take to assist their comprehension, recall, production, and management of their language learning. Rationale for teaching learning strategies to language students. Twenty teachable learning strategies. Guiding principles, instructional framework, and sample activities for implementing instruction in learning strategies.

Diane J. Tedick and Carol A. Klee
Alternative Assessment in the Language Classroom

Multiple forms of measurement (traditional as well as alternative) provide a more comprehensive picture of student performance. Alternative assessment provides information on what learners can *do* with language. It gives learners opportunities to reflect not only on their linguistic development, but also on their learning processes. Identifying and designing tasks that lend themselves to alternative assessment. Checklists and rubrics. Self-assessment and peer assessment. Portfolios.

Patricia Byrd
Grammar in the Foreign Language Classroom: Making Principled Choices

"Teaching grammar" can mean formal presentations of grammatical information (when it can be profitably used by learners), but it can also mean behind-the-scenes decisions made by teachers in the selection of materials and classroom activities. Grammatical knowledge as one part of communicative competence. Grammar = form + meaning + context. Errors and error correction. Grammar instruction related to students' learning styles. Inventorying the textbook's resources for teaching grammar. Supplementing the textbook.

Ana María Schwartz
Listening in a Foreign Language

Treats listening as an active, cognitive process and focuses on strategies that enable learners to comprehend aural input more effectively. Setting goals and objectives based on the characteristics and purposes of listening. Evaluating, adapting, and developing listening materials. Planning the listening lesson. Working with textbook tape programs and video materials. Practicing listening strategies. Interactive listening.

Grace S. Burkart
Spoken Language: What It Is and How to Teach It

Examines several features of spoken language: transactional talk and interactional talk, turn taking behavior, maintaining and shifting conversation topics, managing communication scripts. Argues for raising students' consciousness of speech characteristics. Distinguishes practice-oriented and communication-oriented teaching activities. Communicative competence and communicative efficiency.

Heidi Byrnes

Reading in the Beginning and Intermediate College Foreign Language Class

Presents reading as an interactive process in which the reader creatively constructs meaning on the basis of the text. The reader relies not just on second-language proficiency, but also on first-language literacy and background knowledge of the topic of the text, text type, and target culture. Lesson template for approaching a text through comprehension and production stages. Learning to read and reading to learn. Criteria for selection of texts.

Diane Musumeci

Writing in the Foreign Language Curriculum: Soup and (Fire)crackers

Distinguishes transcription (copying spoken or written words) and composition (combining words and phrases to inform, persuade, entertain, etc.), and shows how appropriate tasks of both types may be used in even the earliest stages of language study. Audience, purpose, and context shape the writing and determine the degree of accuracy required. Kinds of feedback most effective in improving student writing.

Dale L. Lange

The Teaching of Culture in Foreign Language Courses

Adopts a social sciences perspective on culture. Two principal ways of teaching culture: one focusing on facts and information about the culture, the other emphasizing exploration, analysis, and evaluation of features of the culture. Techniques and strategies for teaching culture, including ways of interweaving language learning. Ways to assess culture learning. Treatment of culture learning in three recently published textbooks.

Introduction

This series of ten modules is designed for the professional development of the graduate teaching assistants (TAs) who staff a large percentage of the introductory language courses at four year institutions of higher education. In institutions where teaching assistants are present, they teach approximately half of the sections in first and second year language courses. Despite this fact, it is not at all uncommon for criteria for selection of TAs to omit entirely any questions about prior preparation or experience in the teaching of a foreign language. Moreover, in many foreign language departments, there is no provision for on-the-job training, and the TAs are left to cope on their own. In recent years, an increasing number of language departments are developing preservice and in-service training programs for their TAs, but there is a need for more such programs, and there is a need for suitable training materials to be used in them.

To meet these needs, the Center for Applied Linguistics applied for and was awarded a grant from the Center for International Education of the U.S. Department of Education to develop a series of modules for the professional preparation of TAs and other instructors of first and second year courses in foreign languages. Each of the ten modules focuses on a different topic, providing both a research-based rationale (*why* this approach) and guidelines for pedagogical implementation (*how* to employ effective teaching strategies). They are designed to be used singly or in any combination to supplement materials in an existing training program, or as an entire package to create a training program where none presently exists.

The modules are written by authors who have an interest in the professional preparation of teachers and who are experienced in the design and preparation of materials for language teaching. In the creation of the modules, the authors were guided by several assumptions. First, and most basically, the modules are addressed directly to the TAs themselves, rather than to their coordinators or whoever may be preparing them for their teaching tasks. The approach assumes that the users of the modules (the TAs) will be teaching a first or second year undergraduate foreign language course. It is also assumed that the TAs have had no previous training or experience in teaching a foreign language to undergraduates. They may or may not expect to become foreign language teaching specialists, but they do want to carry out their current teaching assignment as professionally as possible.

The authors assume a generally communicative approach to language teaching, but with room for formal study of grammar, and with perhaps a greater emphasis on reading and writing than is found in many communicative courses. The treatment of topics is generic, in the sense that the modules are intended to be applicable to the teaching of a variety of languages, including the less commonly taught languages. While the authors have been careful to provide references to the appropriate literature to support the pedagogical presentation, the modules are not research papers. The tone is usually conversational, and the authors call on the TAs to reflect on their own current teaching experiences.

In their treatment of pedagogical matters, the authors have used a hands-on approach, with lots of practical tips and suggestions. TAs should be able to find answers to questions such as: What kinds of exercises and techniques can I use to get my students to converse in the language more freely? How can I train my students to feel more confident about listening to the language, so that they won't just freeze when someone speaks to them? How can I make the reading of the language more useful to my students? How can I help my students to write what they want to write, in a way that readers can understand? Similarly, the modules on the results of second language acquisition research, the reflective practice model, learning strategies, culture as content, and alternative assessment all give concrete examples and suggestions for implementation.

If the authors have succeeded, the TAs will read the modules and say to themselves, "I can do that!"

Beyond TA Training
Developing a Reflective Approach to a Career in Language Education

Celeste Kinginger
Southwest Missouri State University

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Grace Stovall Burkart, Editor
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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

The Need for an Integrated Approach to Language Teaching 3

What Is Expertise in Language Education? 5

Developing Your Expertise 10

Developing Your Approach: The Teaching Portfolio 12

Nurturing Your Career 15

References 17

Suggested Additional Reading 18

Figure 1 19

Introduction

The purpose of this module is to assist you in developing a critical and reflective approach to your practice of language study and teaching. In order to do this, you must begin to integrate what you are learning about teaching methods, language acquisition, and the nature of your new profession. There are five parts in this module, each of which consists of a narrative section, followed usually by questions for discussion and suggestions for action. An annotated list of suggestions for additional reading is also provided. In the first part, we discuss some of the initial difficulties of entering the profession as a teaching assistant (TA), and in the second part we reflect on the nature of expertise in language education. The third part presents one model of professional development, the reflective practice model, which you may choose to guide you in your own efforts to achieve a coherent approach to language study. The fourth part presents the teaching portfolio as a strategy for long-term professional development and documentation of that development. In the final section, suggestions are offered for ways to begin developing your professional profile while you are in graduate school, so that you will be as prepared as possible for your entry into the profession after graduate school.

The Need for an Integrated Approach to Language Teaching

As a graduate student and a teaching assistant, you may feel that you have two distinct roles and sets of responsibilities. You are a scholar in the field of specialized expertise you wish to pursue; your primary responsibility is to perform well as a student and develop your own competence. You are also a teacher, whose main job is to help your students in their development and to display a professional demeanor in order to inspire their confidence. It is not easy to achieve an appropriate stance for each of these two very demanding roles, especially at first. You may find it difficult to organize your time and effort in order to devote adequate attention to each of these domains.

At the same time, especially if your department organizes itself in the usual way, you have probably begun to appreciate the hierarchical meaning of separating language teaching from the other departmental missions. The reasons for this separation have to do with how we define both "teaching" and "language." In many American institutions of higher learning, teaching is considered a separate category from research or scholarship. This view has a long and distinguished tradition of categorizing "pure" research as the production of knowledge, and teaching as transmission of the knowledge produced by research (Schön, 1983). Of the two activities, knowledge production is considered the more valuable. Another reason has to do with a view of language itself as a lower-level skill which must be mastered before it can be invested with content. This evaluation of the importance of language leads to confusing and divisive conceptual distinctions between language study and literature, between culture and civilization (Kramsch, 1993).

Your own situation probably offers an excellent illustration of this hierarchical structure. You, a relative neophyte, are entrusted with knowledge transmission right away, often without guidance or with only short-term training in the application of a certain teaching method. The knowledge you are to transmit is supposed to be mainly unproblematic. On the other hand, to become a producer of knowledge will require that you invest years of time and study, and that you prove your competence by passing exams and writing theses. There is probably little or no provision in your graduate program for organized reflection on the value of language study as education.

Meanwhile, it is up to you to resolve any conflict you may feel between the teaching and learning roles you must play, and the hierarchical status and separateness of language teaching may be doing you particular disservice. For example, if you are sufficiently conscientious to be aware of areas for potential improvement in your own language competence, the assumption that language itself should be unproblematic may seem particularly daunting. If you are genuinely interested in teaching, and wish to develop as a teacher, you may find that it is particularly difficult to find the correct balance in assigning importance to the different aspects of your scholarly work.

As you reflect on your own resolution of these issues, you may wish to consider the value of an integrative approach to language teaching. One way to begin is to consider alternative definitions of language: for example, rather than as mere skill, we can define language ability as communicative competence (Savignon, 1983), a complex, domain-specific, interpersonal ability that includes grammatical, social, and strategic dimensions. A broad-based view can help us to appreciate the development of language ability over the long term, and the centrality of language both in professional development and in institutional curricula. Communicative ability in a particular area is an important aspect (if not *the* most important aspect) of expertise, but it is never absolute. As you continue to develop knowledge in your field, you will develop domain-specific communicative competence in that field, but not in others. For example, you may learn how to explain the proper formation and use of verb forms, but not how to scold a two-year-old or instruct a mechanic to dismantle and service airplane engines. Similarly, as students proceed through the curriculum in your department, they do not cease developing their language competence at the point where courses are no longer considered to be language courses; their communicative competence is shaped by the length and nature of their interactions in the language. Because of the relative nature of communicative competence, there is no reason to feel insecure about a perceived need to develop your language ability.

Concerning the integration of language teaching and scholarship, it is important to begin early in your career to reflect on the links between the two that may strengthen both. There are no practical reasons why you should not aspire to a balanced approach, and several reasons why you should. If you pursue a scholarly career, the chances are excellent that your work will have something to do with language education, even if it is not labeled as such. If you do not develop an ability to use what you know, critically and reflectively, in that part of your work that relates to language education, you run the risk of early professional stagnation through lack of conceptual renewal. If, on the other hand, you take up the opportunity you have as a graduate student to start out integrating all of your intellectual resources in a process of continuous development, your teaching will be a part of your scholarly work, and a source of inspiration both to you and to your students.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between training and education? (For you? For your students?)

2. Concept map: With a group of two to four TAs, use a large sheet of paper and a crayon or magic marker to draw a picture of how you see the relationship between each of the three domains in part A, and/or each of the three domains in part B.
   A. research — teaching — theory
   B. language — literature — culture

   Are they the same thing, or different? Do they overlap? How? Are there other categories you need? If you are working with a class, nominate a spokesperson to present your map to the rest of the TAs in your class.

3. Who was your favorite teacher when you were in high school? In college? Why did you admire that person? What did you enjoy about being in his/her class? How do you think the teacher defined his/her area of expertise?

Suggestions for Action

1. Write your professional history, including everything significant that led to your now being a language TA. What were the major turning points? What were the most important influences? Compare your history with the histories of the other TAs you know.

2. The significance of your accomplishments has won you a place in the 2015 edition of *Who's Who in Language Study*. Write the description of your work.

What is Expertise in Language Education?

In the first part, we considered the need for you to develop an integrated approach to language education by using all of the intellectual resources available to you, including your own history as a learner and your aspirations as a scholar. In this section, we will consider some specific conceptual resources that emanate from sources within language research and education. In order to begin evaluating information about language development and teaching, you need some information about the groups that produce it and their priorities. We will review and critique three "ways of talking" about language education. A fourth way is the critical approach exemplified in the present review.

Like other scholarly fields, language education is characterized by debate which can appear—or be made to appear—more dramatic than it really is. From a distance, it can seem that the profession's evolution is characterized by sweeping pendulum swings: all the way over in this direction, then all the way back, as if wildly various allegiances were normal, and changes in the profession's discourse could be attributed to personal whim, popularity contests, or boredom.

One reason why continuous change exists in the language teaching profession is that it must respond to a constantly evolving socio-political context. One reason for productive if sometimes acrimonious debate is that various groups have a stake in the process of revision; conflicts surrounding definitions of language ability arise in part from fundamental incompatibilities between the traditions, styles, values, and political leanings of these groups (Kramsch, 1995). When you are presented with a particular view of language or language learning, it is important for you to consider where this view came from and the extent to which it is congruous with your own traditions, style, values, and political leanings.

Although there is a potentially unlimited number of different relevant groups, in the American foreign language teaching profession, it is possible to identify a small number of the most influential discourse communities. Kramsch (1995) lists four distinct discourse communities formed on the basis of historically determined social conditions, each of which has its own way of talking about the aims of foreign language teaching. Kramsch also notes the constitutive value of these ways of construing foreign language teaching: "Different ways with words create different ways of viewing the world to which these words refer, ways that bear the mark of different institutional histories and individual trajectories" (p. 9). In the literature on language teaching and in other sources of information for teachers, we see competition for prestige and recognition among these different ways of talking.

(1) The *discourse of policy and public relations* emphasizes "priorities," "standards," "accountability," and "performance objectives." This discourse constructs its ideology primarily around the opposition between foreign language education as a field and all other academic fields, in competition for national attention, priority, and funding. Much of the work of this discourse is framed as a struggle to build consensus within foreign language education in order to present a unified picture of strength and effectiveness in terms that the taxpaying public can readily understand. Since it is close to the public discourses of politics, government, business, and industry, it borrows many of its forms from these sources. The emphasis on utility and effectiveness comes from the discourse of business; the calculated use of popular, simple metaphor (for example, "the push toward communication," "the ties that bind," "the journey of a lifetime"), the hortatory tone and the rhetorical use of repetition are borrowed from the discourses of political and quasi-religious speech. Consider, for example, a volume in the ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series devoted to the question of national standards and articulation across educational levels. The volume ends with this paragraph by Paul Sandrock of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction:

> We are at the crossroads. We can create coherence out of the separated foreign language experiences that are all too common now. Commit to aligning the pieces of foreign language education within systemic reform. Travel as an explorer. The nature of the journey is that you must experience it yourself. Observe, reflect, learn, grow and ensure that no child is left behind.
> (Sandrock, 1995, p. 186)

The above paragraph illustrates the tension in this discourse between the need for uniformity in the face of outside pressure, and the desire to respect the local needs and creativity of individual schools and educators. The discourse succeeds much better at conveying the former than the latter, precisely because its ideology values consensus around effectiveness and utility over anything else. The use of an inclusive "we" at the beginning of the paragraph suggests that Sandrock is at once inviting the reader to feel a part of the expertise that informs his "vision of the standards" (p. 193) and emphasizing the collective effort that is required for collaborative action across the educational levels. The shift to the imperative in the third sentence can be interpreted either as a plea or as an order to cooperate. In either case, the two sentences that follow do not seem related to the alignment of education, but rather to something else entirely, the personal journey to enlightenment. It is implied, perhaps, that "getting on the program" by committing to Sandrock's vision will lead the reader to a personal and *personalized* satisfaction, but it is not clear how. This discourse is not fundamentally concerned with the voices of individuals, even though it is precisely the individual professional who must be convinced.

In recent years this way of talking has gained in prominence within American foreign language education, largely due to efforts by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages to promote its own *Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL, 1989) and *National Standards* (ACTFL, 1993). Notably under-emphasized in this discourse are the primary concerns of the other discourses, namely the "real" processes of language acquisition as revealed in acquisition research, the local classroom contexts of teachers' work, and the broader relevance of language education beyond quantifiable competencies.

(2) In the *discourse of research and theory*, scholars studying cognitive processes of language acquisition tend to emphasize the importance of objective, scientific inquiry, and of progress toward greater knowledge of the truth about interlanguage and the psycholinguistic aspects of acquisition processes. This discourse community shares an infrequently articulated if ever-present belief in the ultimate theory of language acquisition toward which it is worthwhile to strive. "Most researchers working in the field believe that eventually it will be possible to arrive at theories that are sufficiently well corroborated to command allegiance" (Beretta, 1991, p. 493). For many members, the attainment of this theoretical account is the absolute priority of research, irrespective of any potential applications (for example, in teaching).

The process of becoming a member of this discourse community is a matter of great importance, for members must mark their belonging with a true appreciation of scientific method, an ability to suspend disbelief in the application of quantitative or statistical methods to the study of humans, and of course, an extensive professional jargon. To become a member of this community normally requires education at the graduate level in linguistics, cognitive science, second language acquisition, or a related field, followed by demonstration of competence in using the requisite forms of discourse to present original research.

To sample this discourse, consider some of the titles of articles in a special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* devoted to the "Role of Instruction in Second Language Acquisition" (1993, Volume 15,2):

> On explicit and negative data effecting and affecting
> competence and linguistic behavior
> Input enhancement in instructed SLA: Theoretical bases
> Positive evidence and preemption in the second language
> classroom
> Explicit instruction and input processing

"Input," "preemption," "processing," —all terms which refer to specific concepts within theoretical constructs known to competent users of these articles. The texts of the articles reveal an elaborate received format for the presentation of information. Reports of experimental findings, for example, must show adequate review of previous related study, details about the experimental method, the findings, and an interpretation of the findings which relates both to the earlier research previously cited, and to next logical steps toward the truth. Elegance resides in such qualities as achievement of greater theoretical parsimony, creative (but credible) refutation of earlier theories, attention to detail, and appropriate convergence of hypothesis and research design.

For the most part, once again, this discourse does not concern itself with the main questions of the others. It does not address the national or state policies governing language instruction, nor does it deal with the cultural or social significance of language education. To the extent that it approaches issues of language teaching, it is as a source of expert systems which must be carefully interpreted by the experts, then applied only with caution, primarily as a guide in formation of expectations about how natural processes of acquisition may unfold with or without intervention from teachers.

(3) The *discourse of teachers and teacher educators* highlights specific, practical skills and outcomes and the means of attaining them in the classroom. This is the discourse of educators who are confronted on a daily basis with the various dilemmas of classroom work: how to organize material, what and how to teach, how to evaluate progress toward attainment of goals.

Issues which, within the other discourses, may be complex subjects of long-term inquiry, such as the nature and significance of social context, or the natural processes of interlanguage development, become practical problems requiring an immediate solution. For example, one way in which the development of grammatical competence is frequently addressed is in terms of error correction, that is, what the instructor should *do* about students' production of non-native forms. In the following example, from Rivers' *Teaching French: A Practical Guide* (1988), the writer addresses teachers directly on the subject of error correction during autonomous oral interaction:

> The best approach during interaction activities is for the instructor silently to note consistent, systematic errors (not slips of the tongue and occasional lapses in areas where the student usually acquits himself well). These errors will then be discussed with the student at a time when the instructor is helping him to evaluate his success in interaction, with particular attention to the types of errors which hinder communication. The instructor will then use his knowledge of the areas of weakness of a number of students as a basis for his emphases in instruction and review. In this way, we help students focus on what are problem areas for them as they learn from their mistakes.
>
> (Rivers, 1988, p. 55)

Note that the emphasis here is on assisting students in the efficient production of error-free language, based on the assumption that conscious, well-organized work in the classroom will ultimately lead to learning. The problem is framed as the teacher's responsibility to observe and understand learners, and to arrange learning accordingly. The question of what an error is, or what it might mean as a social, cultural, or psycholinguistic phenomenon, is decidedly secondary to action-related concern.

Much of the confusion and conflict surrounding language study is due to the ways in which these discourses shape basic assumptions about what kinds of expertise are important. It is as natural for them to be different from one another as it is for them to compete for recognition and prestige among the members of the profession at large. The only real danger inherent in this situation is that of uncritical acceptance of a particular group's vision, especially if it is in conflict with our local circumstances or concerns.

(4) Kramsch notes the presence of a fourth system, *the discourse of the humanities and social sciences*, which is "the discourse of critical pedagogy, cultural criticism, and postmodern thought. It shows evidence of social and political consciousness—what Paolo Freire calls *conscientizacão*. It stresses the importance of using theory to understand concrete realities" (Kramsch, 1995, p. 8). This discourse, though still relatively less important in American foreign language teaching, places the others in a particularly useful perspective, especially as concerns the significance and integration of language education within the context of institutional learning. In particular, it provides a useful vantage point from which to assess the educational value of language study: the extent to which the profession meets its stated larger goals of educating for peace, intercultural understanding, and awareness of the social meaning of language.

It also allows us, as we have done in the preceding sections, to critically review the social and political meanings of various "ways of talking" about language education itself. One major goal of graduate studies in the humanities and social sciences is the development of advanced critical awareness of language: using this expertise is essential as you work toward your personal teaching approach and understanding of the profession.

Question for Discussion

1. Which of the four "ways of talking" outlined in Kramsch (1995) seems the most useful to you in developing your teaching approach? Why?

Suggestions for Action

1. Read and critique a text that is about priorities in language study. The text could be the preface of a textbook used for language instruction in your department, or the written justification for language study (or even a language requirement) in the course catalogue of your school. What are the assumptions about language study that underlie the rationale given in the text? Do you share these assumptions?

2. Read an article about language teaching from one of the major journals (*Foreign Language Annals, Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly, Hispania, French Review, Die Unterrichtspraxis*). What are the "ways of talking" that the authors use to justify their suggestions for teaching or to situate their research?

3. Read an article about language research from one of the major research journals (*Applied Linguistics, Language Learning, Studies in Second Language Acquisition*). Can you identify implications of the findings for language teaching?

Developing your Expertise

In the first two parts of this module, we have insisted on the multifaceted and variable nature of foreign language teaching expertise. As a language educator, you will benefit from working toward a personal teaching philosophy that draws on all of the expertise available to you. In this section we will examine one model of professional development, the reflective practice model (Schön, 1983), which may assist you in achieving an integrated view.

In essence, the reflective practice model is itself an attempt at integration of two different theories of professional development: the "craft" model and the "applied science" model (Wallace, 1991). In the craft model, learning involves exposure to the activity of experts, followed by imitation and practice. The craft model is atheoretical: learning to practice a profession is analogous to skilled activity in general. In the applied science model, knowledge produced elsewhere by researchers and theorists is exported and applied in the work setting. Professional renewal consists of periodic updates on the state of the art in research.

The reflective practice model provides a dynamic approach to professional development over the long term. The model was first developed by Schön, who wished to explain the tacit "knowledge-in action" displayed by competent professionals in a variety of fields. In the model (see Fig. 1) cycles of theory-building, application and reflection lead to the integration of technical knowledge with life experiences. The principal advantage of the reflective practice model is that it centers all of this activity in your experience of diverse situations, experiences, and "ways of talking," allowing you to consider your classroom as a kind of laboratory where you can test the ability of technical knowledge to help you in your practice. The model also assumes that the cycles of practice and reflection will be continuous, in other words, that you will continue throughout your career to change your approach through critical and active evaluation of new technical knowledge, or knowledge created within a discourse community with which you had been previously unfamiliar.

[See Figure 1 at end of text]

When it is carefully planned and adequately documented, teacher-directed change via reflective practice is often termed "action research." The action research cycle can begin either with a perceived need for change in the classroom or with a new insight into teaching, language, or learning. Key to successful action research is the formulation of questions which are non-trivial and answerable (Chamot, 1995). For example, suppose you are interested in improving writing instruction in your classroom via action research. The question "How can I get students to write more correctly?" is too broad to be answered without further refinement. As you reflect upon ways to arrive at a suitable question, you may wish to read some accounts of recent writing research. As you read, you learn about a range of different ways to evaluate writing and decide to investigate the effect of changing your writing evaluation practice.

In this way, your initial reflection leads to a planned intervention: an "action," or change in teaching procedures which follows upon a particular question. In the next phase of research planning, you refine your question further until it becomes specific enough to form the basis of your research. In this case, you may decide to investigate how a change in your writing evaluation practice affects the amount of writing students produce. This question is answerable via comparison and observation, and it is non-trivial since you know that the amount of writing students perform correlates with writing proficiency. You plan to observe the amount of writing students provide when you evaluate using your current practice (counting errors), then switch to the use of a holistic rating scale and document the change. Following your experiment, you reflect on the outcome and adapt your practice accordingly or plan a new study.

Action research presents the advantage of being "owned" by the teachers who practice it in their own teaching contexts, and as such, it provides a useful complement to your acquaintance with the various discourses of language education and the educational marketplace.

The real achievement of action research and reflective practice, however, is a personal sense of coherence: the perception that your teaching practices are consonant with a philosophy informed by the full range of expertise available to you. The coherence attained through reflective practice is not a static "once-and-for-all" achievement, but must remain open and flexible. As your own professional development proceeds, and as new kinds of expertise gain prominence in the educational literature and marketplace, you will need the capacity to integrate new knowledges into your sense of what is fundamentally right about language learning and teaching. At the same time, your coherence system will provide a basis for critical judgment and, if need be, rejection of ideas whose relevance or provenance is questionable.

Questions for Discussion

1. What elements are required to make up a complete approach to language teaching?

2. Do a "free writing" exercise, then critique the results. Write for ten minutes on the topic: My Approach to Teaching. When you have finished, analyze the way you describe language and learning. Compare your ideas with a colleague's. Do you have a theory of language? What metaphors do you use to explain your views, and where do you think they come from: one of the discourses of language education? your personal history as a teacher or learner? common sense?

Suggestion for Action

1. Read one of the sources on "action research" in the Suggestions for Additional Reading, then develop and carry out an action research project focused on a question or problem in your teaching.

Developing Your Approach: The Teaching Portfolio

As you are developing your approach to language education, you may wish to consider the benefits of documenting your progress along the way in a teaching portfolio (Seldin, 1991). In essence, the teaching portfolio is nothing more or less than your record of your own performance in teaching, of your development as a teacher, and of the coherence you build through reflective practice. As simple as the concept may seem, the impact of the teaching portfolio can be considerable, both in terms of evaluation of teachers and in terms of how teaching itself is valued.

Consider for a moment how the classroom performance of teaching assistants is traditionally evaluated. Normally, in American institutions of higher learning, students are expected to rate their teacher and the course, often using standardized forms and/or questionnaires. Often, TAs are also observed as they teach by a supervisor, generally a member of the faculty. Sometimes departments also institute a system of peer observation and evaluation. As useful as these methods of evaluation can be, they are fundamentally insufficient: the one point of view that is missing from all of them is that of the TA whose work is being evaluated. The teaching portfolio offers you an opportunity to present the best or most interesting aspects of your own work, and so to give voice in the evaluation process to your own perspective on teaching. If you are drawn to innovative teaching procedures, and regularly perform action research in your classroom, you may find it especially useful to have a place to explain your stance to the person or people whose job it is to evaluate your work.

The teaching portfolio also provides a concrete means of addressing the perceived incompatibility of teaching and scholarship and of heightening the value of integrative views towards these activities. The reflective work that goes into producing a portfolio almost inevitably brings the scholarly value of teaching into focus, both for individuals and for groups of colleagues working together on portfolio projects. For these reasons, employers are increasingly requesting that teachers present a teaching portfolio for hiring and for subsequent tenure or promotion review.

Since one of the purposes of a portfolio is to show change and development over time, and since the construction of a portfolio can be time consuming if you are in a hurry and unprepared, the earlier you begin to assemble your portfolio materials, the better. If you start at the beginning of your career to collect your portfolio materials, and to reflect critically and in writing on their value, then, when the time comes, you will be able to present a compelling image of your developing practice.

There is no recipe for the teaching portfolio, because every teacher has a particular approach and will wish to highlight particular strengths. Before you begin, you should think carefully about which aspects of your teaching you wish to foreground. Typically, the portfolio contains at least two sections: information about the teacher's background and philosophy, and a series of annotated samples of work. It is important to select these samples judiciously in order to present a well-rounded picture of your work without exhausting your reader's patience. Depending upon the purpose of the portfolio, you may or may not wish to include a third section for official evaluations of your teaching. A skeleton table of contents follows.

Contents of a Teaching Portfolio

Section One: Background information

- Professional biography: a narrative description of your professional history, the major influences on your teaching.
- Teaching philosophy: a description of how you teach and why, the theoretical or philosophical foundations of your approach.
- Information about the environment(s) where you have worked and any relevant details about courses you have taught.

Section Two: Selected entries reflecting diverse aspects of performance

This section can contain any of a range of different document types. The only stipulation is that the work sample must be contextualized for the reader; this is most easily achieved with annotations or explanations of their significance in your teaching. Samples of work can include:

- assignments you have written or in-class tasks you have designed
- syllabi, to demonstrate your involvement in course design and development
- student work (projects, compositions, skits) and your reaction to the work, to show how you evaluate and provide feedback to learners
- tests or quizzes you have written
- video- or audiotapes of lessons or lesson parts
- documents showing your progress in learning to teach (e.g., a corrected composition from this year, one from last year, and a commentary on the differences)
- descriptions of your participation in professional development activities (e.g., conferences, workshops)
- descriptions and/or documents relating to any teaching-oriented professional service you have performed (e.g., leading workshops, publishing papers)

Section Three: Required information

- student evaluations
- letters of support about your teaching
- supervisors' reports

Nurturing Your Career

Unfortunately, many TAs are unaware of the importance of professional development activities during graduate study and live to regret missed opportunities when the time comes to seek employment. Often, the routine obligations of teaching and the pressure of advanced study seem to provide more than enough work to do—there does not seem to be enough time to add anything extra. Nonetheless, if you intend to pursue a career in language education, you will probably benefit from some focus on your professional development and profile. You should consider what kind of work you hope to do, and what steps you can take now in order to enhance your chances of finding that work.

If you have begun to develop a coherent approach to teaching and scholarship through the kinds of integration and reflection advocated here, you may discover that there is an additional advantage to this approach to be found in the job search. As mentioned in the first part of this module, unless your circumstances are exceptional, it will be very difficult to begin your professional career in a post allowing you to devote all or most of your time to your specialized field. If you are involved in education, the chances are good that it will be some form of language education. You will do much to improve your chances of finding satisfying work if you can demonstrate not only that you are flexible and capable in a range of teaching roles, but also that you see the connections between the roles and approach them all with equal seriousness.

In addition to the teaching portfolio, there are numerous more concrete ways in which you can begin to work toward a successful and satisfying long-term career in language education. You can begin to gather information about the job market and about prospects for employment in different kinds of institutions. You can also begin to develop your professional network, both informational and personal, not only because it will become one of your most important sources of new technical knowledge in the future, but also because it will help you to feel connected to others who share your views and interests. Finally, you can participate in activities that will contribute to your awareness and experience while improving your professional profile. These would include attendance and participation in workshops and conferences, but also membership in professional associations, administrative work such as course or exam coordination, community service such as tutoring, and academic service such as advising.

Suggestions for Action

1. Find out what professional meetings or conferences in your area of research or teaching will be held near where you live this year. If possible, make a point of attending at least one such meeting. If you are ready, submit an abstract for a presentation at a conference.

2. Identify the faculty members you want as mentors and cultivate their interest in you.

3. Find someone who has just accepted the kind of employment you will be seeking after graduate school (e.g., an assistant professor, if you are preparing a doctorate). Ask for advice on the process of getting a job, and ask if you may see a copy of the person's curriculum vitae.

4. Read the ads. Find the publications that list job openings in your field. (For university and college employment in the modern languages, the main sources are the *Modern Language Association Job List* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education.*)

5. Find out which electronic discussion groups are active in your field. "Lurk" (read others' contributions without joining in) for a while until you have determined what the norms are for interactions, then participate.

6. Gather information about professional associations in your field and join those whose interests are closest to your own. Student memberships are generally much less expensive than regular memberships and can be a valuable source of information and networking possibilities.

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Wallace, M. J. (1991). *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A Reflective Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Suggested Additional Reading

Chamot, A. U. (1995). The Teacher's Voice: Action Research in Your Classroom. *ERIC/ CLL News Bulletin*, 18(2).

Although it was written for elementary school language teachers, this article provides an excellent general primer on action research for teachers at all levels.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.

An approach to language teaching that overlaps significantly with the discourse of the humanities and social sciences.

Lightbown, P. and N. Spada. (1993). *How Languages Are Learned*. New York: Oxford University Press.

A readable account of the discourse of second language research, by authors who are also conversant with the discourse of teaching and methodology.

Richards, J. and C. Lockhart. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book offers case studies of action research carried out by other language teachers, as well as numerous suggestions and resources for teacher-directed inquiry.

Savignon, S. (1983). *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

A highly influential, "classic" book in language teaching, explaining both the conceptual and historical background and the classroom implications of communicative approaches.

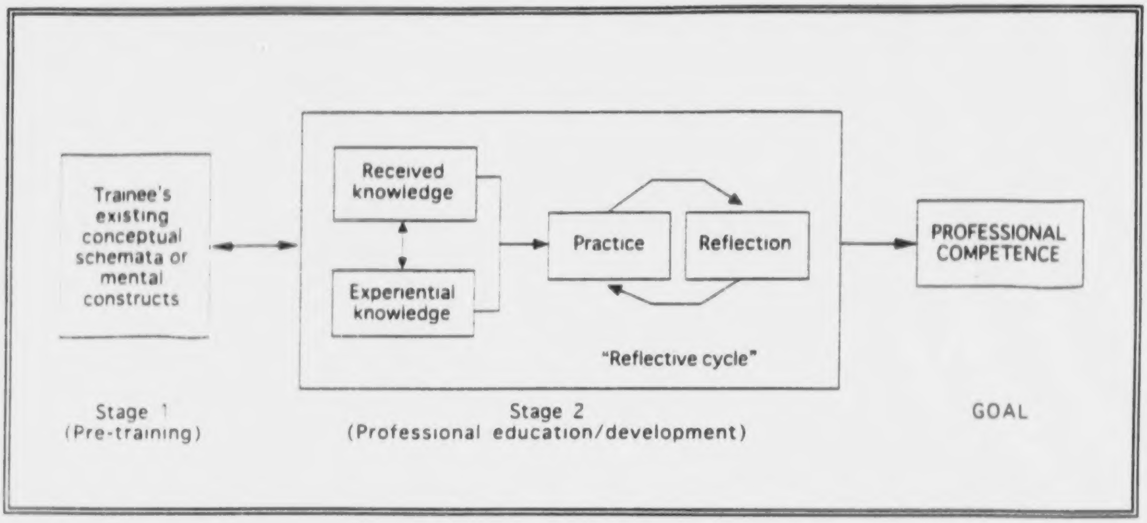
Seldin, P. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

This book provides an excellent overview of the rationale for using teaching portfolios, along with many practical suggestions on their construction.

The Author

Celeste Kinginger was a TA teaching two sections of early-stage or intermediate French every semester for six years before she got her Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education (U. Illinois). The assistance she received during that time ranged from nonexistent or very bad to excellent.

Figure 1 Reflective Practice Model of Professional Education/Development


Trainee's existing conceptual schemata or mental constructs
Received knowledge
Experiential knowledge
Practice
Reflection
"Reflective cycle"
PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE
Stage 1
(Pre-training)
Stage 2
(Professional education/development)
GOAL

Wallace (1991). Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

Research and Language Learning: A Tour of the Horizon

Ken Sheppard
Center for Applied Linguistics
and
Université du Centre, Tunisia

one of a series of modules for the

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Four Issues 4

- What is a foreign language? 4
- What do we know about learners? 9
- What does the process of language learning look like? 13
- What can the classroom contribute? 17

Conclusion 22

References 24

Suggested Additional Reading 28

Introduction

This module is called a tour because it is a selective summary of the research available on foreign language learning. It is selective, in part, because of the tendency of tour guides to pay more attention to some attractions than others. This guide's preference for linguistic research and, more to the point, research conducted in a theoretical framework, are examples. Inevitably, sites of historic interest have been overlooked—i.e., studies have been left out that might profitably be consulted—and readers are referred to the Suggested Additional Reading at the end for more information about them. There are three additional reasons why this tour sometimes prefers the far horizon to the beaten track—indeed, why no summary of studies relevant to foreign language learning at the university level is ever free of selectivity.

One is that many studies in language learning have been carried out among younger learners. They have been conducted, for example, among immigrant children learning English as a second[1] language. Such learners have educational priorities that are different from your students', and their ages constitute a crucial difference. Their social characteristics, their educational backgrounds, their objectives, the circumstances in which their learning takes place, and their levels of cognitive maturity are all different from those of your students, and significantly so. Studies of such learners, if they are relevant to the lives of university foreign language students at all, are probably only marginally so and should be interpreted with great care. In most such studies, so many differences intervene that drawing useful inferences is virtually precluded. Therefore, few are referred to here.

Another reason for selectivity is that even relevant studies vary importantly in their theoretical assumptions and methods—indeed, they differ in their definitions of language proficiency itself. This makes comparison risky if not impossible. Typically, a study tests a hypothesis, or proposition, about language learning to see if it holds true in the real world. Hypotheses don't fall out of the air, of course. They fall out of a cohesive view of language learning, a theory that itself derives from a close reading of the research literature. Unfortunately, different theoreticians read different literature, so they look at the same phenomena from radically different points of view and therefore come up with theories that are tangential or even incompatible. Even if they yield testable hypotheses, testing those hypotheses may require different research methods. Furthermore, theoretical claims, whatever their source, are often, though not always, re-evaluated and reformulated as new studies are published. By the time a study has been completed, the issue has often been redefined beyond recognition.

A distinction is commonly made between "foreign language" and "second language." A foreign language is one that is taught as a school subject but is not generally used for daily communication within the country. In contrast, a second language is one that may be learned as a school subject but is also widely used for communication in a country. Thus, English is a foreign language for school children studying it in France but a second language for immigrant children studying it in the United States.

Finally, the quality of the research in this field varies considerably. Indeed, the field's infatuation with untested, and in some cases untestable, hypotheses is often remarked, as is the lack of replication.[2] In recent years hypotheses associated with some theorists have achieved the status of guiding principles in many instructional programs. In other words, they have been adopted as truthful statements about language learning without having been tested, and they have been used as the basis for programmatic decisions. This is a slippery slope. In the social sciences, propositions about truth are rarely taken lightly: they are tested rigorously, primarily with the aim of showing them to be false, and they are tested time and time again to make sure that the first results were not just a fluke. That is replication—the steady testing and retesting of a proposition to establish the likelihood that the results cannot be attributed to chance or some variable other than the one isolated for study. Unfortunately, applied linguists have not always been as scrupulous as they could be about repeating tests and getting as close as possible to an estimate of that likelihood, and they have sometimes opted for ideology over common sense.

Question for Discussion

Here's an idea: French majors speak English faster than engineering students.

How could you test that proposition? Once you have decided, rewrite it as a statement that includes whatever assessment measures you intend to use.

Thus, the tour that follows is selective. In its meandering selectivity, it directs your attention to four issues: the language, the learners, the process of language acquisition, and the role of the classroom. It seems reasonable to put language first. Although few people lack language, and few hesitate to define it, language is not as transparent as its ubiquity in human society and public discourse suggests. Since it is virtually impossible to distinguish the language (the linguistic bits and pieces and the rules that govern them systematically) from acquisition, the next issue is the issue of learners: who they are and how such salient differences as exist among them affect this acquisition. We then take a look at the acquisition process itself in broad outline. While we may think of language learning in association with formal, or for that matter informal, classroom behavior—the fear of constant correction, memorizing French inflections, the painful march through Caesar's Gallic Wars, the ponies and crib sheets—language acquisition actually takes place on an altogether different plane. Finally, the module includes a few suggestions for you in the classroom. It would be a mistake, however, to turn to formal research for a lot of practical advice about how to structure your course or teach it. While research can provide interesting insights, you should be chary of turning the handful of tentative and somewhat abstract conclusions it offers into recipes or prescriptions.

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[2] For a good summary of research methodology in this field, see the first chapter in McLaughlin (1987).

Four Issues

What is a foreign language?

A foreign language is a language learned in an environment in which that language is not widely distributed or commonly used. Thus, English is a foreign language in Kyoto, and Japanese is equally foreign in Chicago. The odd thing about this definition is that it hinges not on the substance of the linguistic system itself, nor on its acquisition, but on the circumstances in which it is mastered. Furthermore, these circumstances are still more narrowly defined in university settings, though it must be said that increasingly foreign languages are studied for a variety of purposes, and more and more instruction aims at a broad competence, including proficiency in listening and speaking. The aim was different a hundred years ago.

Question for Discussion

Working with a partner or two, discuss the following three propositions. See if you can agree on their truth value.

Some languages have grammatical rules, some don't.
Unwritten languages are easier to learn than written languages.
Japanese is harder than Spanish.

Foreign language study invaded the Academy in the late 19th century, when it was generally agreed that no man was fully educated unless he could read French or German (in addition to one or two classical languages) well enough to gain access to important literary texts in the original. This preference for literacy development in a foreign language was of course partly a result of the prevailing view that literature was formative, partly a consequence of the university's European orientation, and partly an artifact of the instructional methods then commonly employed in the teaching of classical languages. Grammar-translation—a method relying on translation of material from the foreign language into English (and, to some extent, from English into the foreign language)—stemmed from the oral construal of ancient texts in Latin and Greek courses. It wasn't until members of the governing elite who had fallen victim to this approach discovered that they could scarcely order a meal or book a sleeping compartment in Venice or Wiesbaden that foreign language instruction began to change. That change was accelerated during World War I, which led eventually to the economic expansion and internationalization of business that we have today. As the world has shrunk, the need for functional proficiency in a foreign language has been more widely felt, informal communication has supplanted the reading of Goethe and Voltaire, less commonly taught African and Asian languages have gained academic respectability, and oral proficiency (listening and speaking) has moved into the forefront. These tendencies have had a profound effect on language policy and language teaching.

Indeed, the audiolingual approach—an approach that favors the repetition of patterned utterances on the assumption that language learning is largely a matter of habit formation—emerged in the 20th century in part to accommodate the perceived desire for communicative competence. Its claim to build proficiency from the bottom up, its characteristic emphasis on using the language instead of merely learning about it, and the allied notion that literacy development should be deferred until oral development has expanded to support it, all flowed in part from the need to communicate.

Most recently, communicative approaches have overtaken such behaviorist practices, but that certainly does not mean that listening and speaking are now ignored. Increasingly, university courses are expected to bear the whole burden of foreign language development, from listening right through writing and beyond. Thus, foreign language instruction is today more closely aligned with general language acquisition, that is, with the development of comprehensive language proficiency such as we all have in our native languages, which brings us back to the basic question: what exactly is it that people learn when they learn a language, regardless of the circumstances they find themselves in? In other words, what is language in the first place?

There are almost as many definitions of language as there are linguists, but few would disagree that language and its acquisition are closely linked. In other words, the fact that language, i.e., a native language, is acquired informally in part defines it—the fact that language is acquired unconsciously and universally by very small children in a short period of time suggests that language is different from other forms of human knowledge that are not learned in the same way. Thus, the blinkered definition of foreign language learning as a school subject—its association with the Academy, the panoply of classroom behaviors—seems reductionist when you ponder the accomplishment of children. The fact is that, within three or four years, they learn how to respond appropriately to utterances they have never heard and generate novel recombinations of words and phrases, and do so in whatever language is present in the environment. In short, they master a complex generative system,[3] and it would be inadvisable to define language without recognition of that fact.

Presumably, the only way to explain children's language acquisition is that they have an intact cognitive mechanism at birth, some mental construct, conceivably a knowledge of the rules, a language acquisition device, that enables them to take on language so efficiently. Otherwise, they would not be able to accomplish so much in so little time, and acquisition would be as protracted and incremental as their general cognitive development. Furthermore, that language acquisition device (LAD) must be universal, for it enables children to take on any language that is available in the immediate environment for them to glom onto. The LAD must contain the rules that characterize all languages, not just some subset of languages, or the acquisitional achievement of children across the many languages they learn would be differential. This insight lies behind most of the linguistics, and by implication most of the acquisition research, that has taken place in the last forty years.

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[3] The system is compounded of sounds, words, and the rules that organize them and govern their use. The formal study of these components is divided into phonetics (sounds), phonology (sound combinations, i.e., the predictable shifts in pronunciation that occur when sounds are combined), morphology (syllables and words), syntax (words in combination), and semantics (the range and limits of meaning that word combinations convey).

Question for Discussion

Don't you think that children learn language by imitating the adults around them? Haven't you noticed the children you know doing this? Give some examples.

Does this proposition account for all of their gains in language acquisition?

In short, language is to some extent defined by its acquisition, its acquirability is one of its defining properties, and that acquirability sets it apart from other types of knowledge associated with universities and other institutions. Language has a different status from calculus and chemistry and history and computers. These school subjects are not defined, in any nontrivial way, by their acquirability. It is not important to know that children do or do not master them between age X and age Y or that they do so consciously. Nor can it be said that these bodies of knowledge have a generative character comparable to that of a language, that recombinant capacity that children make so much of in such a short period of time, the rule-governed creativity that gives language its richness and its dynamism.

Indeed, while children's accomplishment in language acquisition outstrips their general cognitive development, or at least their cognitive development does not adequately explain it, achievement in chemistry and history is more closely tied to a learner's intellectual maturity: it is driven by cognition. Such achievement comes only at great cost, and while virtually all children master virtually all the generative rules of language, achievement in calculus and the like is constrained by talent, as well as cognitive maturity. In such courses, individual differences emerge more quickly and run more deeply than they do in the acquisition of native languages. Differences do emerge in foreign language courses, but that may have something to do with institutionalization—some learners are more comfortable with academic routines than others—and the distinct possibility that the LAD diminishes with age and that children and adults have different knowledge sources and different ways of learning.

In any case, children acquire second and third languages almost as easily as they acquire their first, and in language-rich environments like India, Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Morocco multilingualism is the norm. It may even be the universal norm (reliable figures are hard to come by), but whether it is or not, in many countries learning a new language is as natural as breathing. Such learning also often takes place without the visual reinforcement that literacy confers. Literacy is by no means a prerequisite for language acquisition. The argument is sometimes even made that the dependence on written material that comes with literacy may actually interfere with the processing of aural input and make it harder to pick up rules. It is certainly true that there are many phenomenally good language learners in largely illiterate or print-impoverished environments, and of course many of the world's roughly 6500 languages have no orthographies, which definitely makes literacy development problematic.

Again, the reductionist view of language learning as an academic enterprise—replete with grades and tests and texts and semesters—misses the point. Language learning takes place far more often outside than inside institutions. It takes place whether the learner is literate or not, and sometimes even despite literacy, and it is to some extent a process that is governed biologically. The question of the extent to which it is determined biologically, or the extent to which learners can depend on the LAD as they get older, is by no means yet resolved.

What does it mean to know a language? In general, it means the development of two channels, both receptive (or interpretive) skills and productive (or expressive) skills, and there is some formal evidence, as well as plenty of informal, common sense evidence, that the former come along before the latter (Carson, et al., 1990; Harley, et al., 1990). Knowing a language, possessing linguistic knowledge, also entails three levels of mastery. The first level involves all those bits and pieces—e.g., the sounds, the inflections, etc.—that learners can't avoid memorizing, no matter how painful it is to do so. The second involves the rules for combining these elements, while the third involves managing the system, getting used to it, making it work efficiently. This distinction parallels the distinction between information about things and information about how to do things, or declarative and procedural knowledge, respectively (Anderson, 1985).

Of course, even efficient management of the system does not guarantee that you will never make a fool of yourself in a foreign language, as you and I and countless others can attest. In addition to technical mastery of these subsystems, communicative competence entails knowing how to come up with socially appropriate formulations, utterances that fit the circumstances, as well as knowing how to manage communication above the level of the sentence (Biber, 1988) and knowing how to use language to learn more language, a kind of instrumental function associated with acquisition.

Question for Discussion

Time for a confession. Have you ever really made a fool of yourself in a foreign language?

Tell the story to a partner. See if you can agree on what type of gaffe it was—i.e., was it syntactic? lexical? cultural?

Was it funny? Why are such gaffes almost always funny?

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All learners struggle with these types of knowledge to some extent, and to some extent succeed at mastering them. Students who see themselves as mere course-takers, however, possibly even as victims of the prevailing institutional structure of tests and grades and failure, sometimes stop at the rote level and never reach the higher, managerial levels of competence. For them, a foreign language remains a subject much like any other school subject and never becomes a means of wider, and more intimate, communication. It doesn't engage them very deeply.

On the other hand, if your department measures student progress against criteria of functional proficiency, if your students are encouraged to participate in informal learning experiences, and if they are required to use the language spontaneously to communicate their feelings and opinions, they will go further and ultimately become participants in the promiscuous acquisition of languages that goes on all the time, in the Philippines and elsewhere. While they still have to memorize paradigms, what they are really doing is turning rules into utterances, turning utterances into rules, making the language work, and learning to dominate it.

It is at least conceivable that the differences between mere course-takers and real language-learners reflect a cognitive difference. Whereas communicative learners may have residual access to the LAD (possibly only via the abstract universals instantiated in English), less communicative learners may be more dependent on general strategies that have stood them in good stead in a variety of classrooms. That distinction is only a guess, and chances are it's wrong, at least in its simplicity. LAD accessibility is programmed biochemically, not triggered attitudinally. Furthermore, few students are clearly one type or another, and your students probably cluster on the academic end of the continuum. But there is some variety in the paths students take, and their acquisition of the foreign language must have some connection to the rampant acquisition of native languages that goes on all around them. Again, the question is: to what extent is the language learning your students engage in the same as the language learning they engaged in as children?

Whether your students see language learning as natural or not will depend on how you structure your course, and of course on how free you are to structure it at all, and on how you talk to them about their language acquisition. It will also depend on the extent to which they take charge of their learning, which is only another way of saying that the shape and direction of their learning will depend on who they are. For example, if they are highly literate, as of course they are, the acquisitional experiences you provide will carry them into reading and writing. In the process, they may discover that learning to read and write a foreign language is as natural as breathing. Whatever the outcome, they will have been reminded that learning language is different from learning other things, and helping them to see that is a big step forward. There are other things teachers can do to make classroom learning seem more naturalistic. In a sense, "naturalizing" and communicating, the greening of the classroom, are what all the modules in this series are about.

What do we know about learners?

We know something about age. Mature learners of language have more trouble than young ones—at least, they are at a disadvantage when measured against criteria of ultimate attainment. What "ultimate attainment" means is that if you test learners after a long period of exposure, however that is defined, children go further in their development than adults, particularly where pronunciation is concerned. On the other hand, if you test them shortly after they are first exposed to the language, older learners get further faster and make more "initial gains."

Snow and Höfnagel-Höhle (1978) looked at native English speakers of several ages learning Dutch as a second language.[4] In addition to tests of pronunciation, they administered tests that tap a variety of skills, some of them requiring a level of metalinguistic awareness uncommon among young children (e.g., a sentence evaluation or judgment task and a sentence translation task). What they found was that the adolescents (ages 12 to 15) were generally the best learners, in terms of both initial gains and ultimate attainment, but that the children had begun to move ahead in ultimate attainment on three measures, including pronunciation, by the end of the study. Thus, the adolescents, and to some extent the adults (ages 18 to 60), were the most efficient learners at the outset, while the children were coming on fast by the time the study was concluded.

Similarly, studies conducted in roughly the same fructifying period (Bailey, Madden, and Krashen, 1974; Krashen, 1977; Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum, and Robertson, 1978; Larsen-Freeman, 1975) attempted to show, not that adults are necessarily faster, but that they follow a similar path, or "natural order," in second language acquisition. If they do, it would be interesting because the two processes, first and second or foreign language acquisition, might then have something in common. They might both be entirely natural processes motivated in some fashion by the mind of the learner.

One study (Bailey, Madden, and Krashen, 1974), for example, showed that a variety of adult learners enrolled in English as a second language classes at the City University in New York followed virtually the same order of acquisition of grammatical material as a variety of children in comparable classes, suggesting a similarity in their acquisitional experiences across age groups and across first languages. The finding has been widely cited to support a convergence between older and younger learners and an indirect relationship between first and second language acquisition (although this second language acquisition order was different from the order found among children acquiring English as a native language). The claim is suspect because of methodological and interpretational problems, but it raises the prospect that the innate cognitive mechanism is still operative at a relatively

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[4] Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) study learners across various linguistic boundaries and indeed, rarely look at university learners of foreign languages in the United States. Although it was conducted in a second (as opposed to foreign) language context, you may find this particular study more relevant than others because many subjects were older learners and some measures the researchers used to establish proficiency were similar to tests employed in university foreign language courses.

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advanced age. Studies corroborating natural orders among foreign language learners (Fathman, 1978) have strengthened the credibility of the claim, as has more recent research on developmental sequences and stages (Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley, 1988).

However, recent studies conducted with reference to language universals have either suggested the opposite or provided at best tentative support for the possibility of convergence of older and younger language learners (Gass and Schachter, 1989; Hilles, 1986; White, 1985). Universals are abstract rule structures alleged by Chomsky (1981) and others to operate across large numbers of languages. The concept is interesting because it specifies the type of knowledge children are likely to possess at birth to make their manifestly rapid gains in language acquisition. Research employing this concept looks at the readiness with which foreign language learners embrace the universal rules associated with whatever foreign language they are learning, on the assumption that if they do so with alacrity then the LAD is still accessible (Chaudron, 1983; White, 1989). The evidence is mixed. Some studies (Flynn and O'Neill, 1988; White, 1985) support the mechanism's persistent accessibility, while others (Sheppard, 1992; White, 1989) have uncovered a tendency for learners to impose non-universal rules from their native languages on the foreign language. Little if any of this is likely to have an immediate effect on the design of foreign language instruction at the university level; however, it is a promising direction for research, and it will be influential in the future.

Question for Discussion

Imagine that you are the only humanoid on a planet inhabited by creatures called Parthenogenes that issue full blown from the head of their leader, called Parth. They are intelligent, and intelligible, but they don't understand the distinctly mundane notion of childhood.

One day, as you are trying to explain the cognitive differences between human children and adults, you point out that there are some things children don't understand but adults do. They ask you for examples. See if you can come up with five or six. By the way, they have no concept whatever of growth or maturity.

Increasingly, children and adults look like different learners with slightly different capabilities and advantages. Adults hit the ground running, while children, with more time on their hands, stay the course and go further. Children and adults are also good learners of different aspects of language, with children often showing an aptitude for pronunciation and adults for aspects associated with schooling and literacy. Thus, adults have an advantage over children in the types of learning adults are required to undertake. Whether they are similar learners or not, however, your students, your mature learners, are certainly experienced and accomplished. In other words, they are highly literate, and they are sensitive to language at a gross or metalinguistic level whether they know it or not. They are also fully developed cognitively. These abilities predispose them to learn in two significant ways.

In the first place, reading will come more easily because, at least theoretically, they are set up via literacy in their native language for rapid initial gains in foreign language reading (Carrell, 1991; Cummins, 1991; Hulstijn, 1991). They have developed the ability to extract what they need from unfamiliar texts in an efficient manner, and such skills are generic and transferable. Since they have this advantage, even your basic students can undertake leisure reading or the reading of technical material for which they possess the necessary background knowledge. Such reading contributes synergistically to their overall language development. That does not mean that it will be problem free and unimpeded. Literacy doesn't emerge suddenly and miraculously like musical talent ("Without a single lesson, Freddie sat down at the Pleyel and dashed off the F Major Nocturne!"). Rather, it requires application and hard work; but your students can sort out relatively complex material because they have some background knowledge to draw on and strategies for securing what they need from a text. There are also ways to ease their transition into foreign language reading.[5]

Secondly, your students are comparatively good at systems, analysis, games, rules, puzzles, problems, tasks. These skills, allied with their subconscious knowledge of the rules of their native language and a little active "consciousness raising" (Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith, 1988), can enhance initial gains. That means that in figuring out rules and learning how to move the pieces around (the second level of language mastery, described above), they have advantages. As you build their awareness of these rules, encourage experimentation with the language, and referee their performance, they may come to see a language as more of a puzzle than a constant source of drudgery. That does not mean that they will automatically learn to manage the system better (level three of language mastery). These advantages won't make it easier to process aural input or memorize verb endings or start a conversation. All by themselves, they will not sustain the whole burden of foreign language acquisition, and they won't make it fun. But they can make it stimulating—as can exposure to foreign cultures, watching videos, communicating purposefully in a new language, and the like.

Putting the process in a different perspective, your students have devised learning strategies that prove effective in a variety of learning experiences. Learning strategies are coping mechanisms learners develop, consciously or unconsciously, to regulate and manage input and the absorption of new material. Recently, they have been given considerable attention.[6] O'Malley and Chamot (1990), for example, have identified such effective strategies as seeking clarification, verifying assumptions, analyzing, monitoring output, and guessing. Additionally, Bialystok (1990) and others have identified what they call

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[5] Learning to write in a foreign language is even more problematic than learning to read, as Silva (1993) and others have pointed out, since writers have fewer resources at their command in the foreign language than in their native language.

[6] One reason is that there is a widely, though by no means universally, held view that one cause of child-adult differences is that language functions are differentially distributed in the brains of children and adults. While children assimilate language in unanalyzed chunks, and of course depend on that miraculous cognitive mechanism (the LAD) to sustain them, adults take a more analytical approach and fall back on strategies that have proved effective in many learning contexts.

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"communication strategies" that help learners form utterances and participate in conversation. Bialystok's include the paraphrasing of a partner's utterance, talking around the point, abandoning a topic altogether ("avoidance"), translation—all of which at least maintain the discourse, though they may also hijack it and carry it off in a new direction. They are also similar to the "strategic competence" that forms part of general communicative competence (see above). Krashen would say that such learners are seeking input they can use for acquisition, what he calls "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1982, 1985, 1992).

Oxford and Cohen (1992) have suggested that the cognitive status of many of these strategies (Are they conscious? Are they learnable?) and their role in language learning are still murky. The problem is that the information adduced in their support comes from retrospective reports, called "think-aloud protocols," of successful language learners. Without an independent assessment of these reports, and absent reports from unsuccessful learners for comparison, it is difficult to know if the reported strategies actually motivate success or themselves have an underlying motive—something like an ability to perform think-aloud protocols, for example. Even if we understood their status better, we still might not know if they are teachable.

Suggestion for Action

Make a list of a dozen color terms in a foreign language.

For each word, recorded in the Latin alphabet, provide a pronunciation guide and a one-word translation.

Give your list to a small group of native English speakers who don't know the foreign language and ask them to memorize the words in ten minutes. Don't give them any other information.

When ten minutes are up, ask them to discuss the strategies they used to accomplish the task.

In general, the most successful learners seem to have the largest strategy repertoires, and they are good at choosing the most effective strategies for whatever circumstances they are in (Rubin, 1975). Awareness of the process as a whole also seems to be associated with success (Wenden, 1987), though generic, metacognitive strategies involving executive control and the like appear to be less infuential than task-specific, cognitive strategies such as those involving internal modeling and language processing. At least one study reports that cognitive strategies such as repetition and note-taking are more frequently relied on than metacognitive strategies such as planning (Chamot, O'Malley, Küpper, and Impink-Hernández, 1987), and interesting differences in strategy selection along dimensions of gender, age, and task type have also been reported. On the whole, however, consensus as to the nature and distribution of these strategies has not been achieved. Without exploring the conceptual issues too deeply, many practitioners simply assume that strategies exist, that they are influential, and that effective strategies can be taught to less effective learners. Others have their doubts.

In short, your students have the advantage of knowing at least one other language well. Indeed, much of their experience has been mediated by that language, and their habitual dependence on it might make them less willing to take risks in the new language. The metalinguistic awareness they have developed by virtue of first language literacy may confer an advantage. That is, they have powerful intuitions about many aspects of language in general and the games people play with it. They understand the systematicity of language, they are good at inductive reasoning, they are comfortable with the level of abstraction characteristic of many linguistic rules, etc. They are also experienced general learners and masters of the classroom. They know how to organize language input, or indeed any kind of input, for efficient acquisition. Thus, their background knowledge both complicates and facilitates the process of language learning. It can complicate it by giving the native language too big a role or reducing language to an academic routine. It can facilitate it by enabling the learner to grasp the shape of the new language in broad outline quickly and set priorities. Your job is to understand how to discourage overreliance on this knowledge while enlisting its support in behalf of foreign language development.

Since it is likely that your most active and successful students depend on strategies to dominate the material while learning it, it won't come as a surprise to learn that IQ tests—which correlate highly with success in school but are otherwise poorly defined—are often good predictors of achievement in foreign language classes, especially in school-related aspects like reading and grammar. Although it is theoretically possible to identify such potential predictors, and to group students accordingly, differences among learners so grouped will inevitably surface within a matter of weeks. Diversity would emerge even if assessment instruments and the protocols for categorizing students were more finely tuned than they now are, and if we knew a lot more about what makes a good language learner. Indeed, the tendency of learners to differ in a bewildering variety of ways and their volatility as achievers are hallmarks of the language learning process, and readers are encouraged to explore the variety of personality, attitudinal, and social variables that have been used to distinguish them. A good place to start is Brown (1987). Fascinating as the topic is, however, many variables that have been studied—and everything from gender to extroversion has been studied—are unlikely to have an immediate effect on your classes. Even if they do, it is unlikely that you have the power to control or manipulate them.

What does the process of language learning look like?

Despite the research in all of these domains, and the certainty with which findings are sometimes reported, the process of foreign language acquisition itself is largely uncharted.[7] While language learners have various aptitudes, they all have to cross unfamiliar terrain without maps or compasses. In other words, they have to negotiate a sequence of "approximative" grammars called interlanguages (ILs), each of which represents a level of understanding of, or a cluster of hypotheses about, the target language. Here is what that sequence, that wilderness or interlanguage,[8] looks like, insofar as we can tell. Since we can't tell very much, the description is largely metaphorical.

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[7] Take a look at Pinker's (1994) chapter called "Language Organs and Grammar Genes" to get a good idea of just how *incognita* the *terra* really is.

Uniqueness

At the outset of the process, there is a lot of variety among language learners, and (theoretically at least) ILs vary significantly from learner to learner. As Gass and Selinker have reported (1994: 40), ILs are "unique creations [since] each individual creates his or her own language system." As learners move gradually toward competence in the foreign language, they impose rules on the welter of foreign language material to which they are exposed. They all do it differently, though the native language plays a role, and therefore learners who share a native language will construct rules out of the same raw material. The variability of ILs is to some extent traceable to "the effect of situation, linguistic context, degree of planning, or some other identifiable cause" (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991).

As with any attempt to capture a process that cannot be directly observed, however, the extent to which these ILs vary is anybody's guess. Another problem is that the IL is a moving target, growing and changing as the learner's competence increases. Another is that we would have no way of measuring the variety even if we had harder data, because we have no way of manipulating the data, and never will so long as humane considerations prevail and linguists are kept (as of course they should be) from manipulating students in any but the most superficial ways. In other words, it is impossible to know how common a particular occurrence is if we don't know what the range and distribution of possible occurrences are.

Despite these problems, we do know that ILs vary somewhat, though we may not know if they really are the highly personalized, "idiosyncratic dialects"[9] that Corder (1971: 151) envisioned. Nor would a more precise measure of their idiosyncrasy necessarily be of much help in planning and teaching a foreign language course.

Systematicity

Interlanguages also vary systematically over time, according to those who have looked at the data on learner errors (Brown, 1987). At the earliest stage, such errors are often random and unsystematic, but once the shape of the new system begins to emerge, they take on systematicity. This simply means, for example, that once students learn the inflections for a single class of verbs, they may apply them to all classes indiscriminately. They will still make errors, therefore, but their errors are predicated on systematic assumptions, or rules, about the language. Many of these putative rules stem from the foreign language, some fall out of the native language, some are unique. Whatever their source, students in this phase pay little attention to errors, which makes error correction on your part a largely thankless exercise.

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[8] The term "interlanguage" is used for each "approximative system" (Nemser, 1971) as well as for the sequence of such systems as a whole.

[9] A dialect is one version of a language, not by any means a "substandard" variety. Thus, the standard variety—the one typically associated with formal discourses such as lectures and news programs—is simply one dialect among many.

Their learning also has an irregular ebb and flow: forward spurts, followed by confusion and a temporary decrement ("backsliding"), followed by consolidation and equilibrium. Once equilibrium is achieved, learners' errors become more consistent, and students are perceptibly more receptive to correction. For that reason, many methodologists, particularly those concerned with "comprehensible output" (Swain, 1985), see a role for error correction once a learner's awareness of errors deepens and enlarges. This is the phase at which Curran and others associated with Counseling-Learning approach to language teaching (Brown, 1987) suggest that an interesting role-reversal takes place: learners begin to take charge of their learning, relegating the teacher to the subsidiary role of adviser. Advice about errors is one type of advice they then demand of them.

In any case, variability isn't chaotic. Learners vary within limits, and it is the general pattern of variability that many foreign language teachers find interesting, and in many ways frustrating.

Fossilization

Some rules are more resistent to change and improvement than others and get more firmly imprinted on the IL. Fossilization results when these illegitimate rules become permanent. This explains, at least metaphorically, the tendency of some learners to stop progressing and remain at a plateau. It is more common among older students than children, no doubt for a variety of psychosocial as well as cognitive reasons.

For example, some learners—who have another language to fall back on, after all—learn as much of the foreign language as they need for their purposes. Students stop learning once they reach a minimal objective, whether that objective is short term and academic (e.g., passing a test) or long term and communicative (e.g., spending a semester abroad). A lot of the unruliness they exhibit in the meantime will sort itself out eventually, if they stay the course. There is little point in trying to correct all their errors in the hope of extirpating the deviant rules they have adopted. Correction won't have an effect before learners are ready. In this small window of opportunity, in the final phase of the IL passage, learners are receptive to, indeed demand, error correction, but there are realistic limits to the amount they can absorb, given their tendency to remain at their plateau.

Convergence

As learners' rules approximate those of the foreign language, by definition learners shed dependence on their native languages. Once foreign language norms predominate, convergence sets in. This means that learners who come from different native language backgrounds will make similar assumptions, formulate similar hypotheses, about the rules of the foreign language and make similar errors. These sets of assumptions may not resemble the rules of the target language very closely, but they do resemble each other. Variability is

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washing out and universal preferences are bobbing to the surface. If the process continues and the learner persists, that process is eventually overtaken by success; in other words, the learner's knowledge of the rules of the foreign language is virtually complete and comprehensive. There will always be an element of dependence on an IL or the native language, even among the most proficient speakers, particularly where production is concerned. Some subsystems may remain inchoate or fossilized, and some skills may be stronger than others, but the learner's knowledge of the language is as extensive as it is going to get.

Question for Discussion

Speakers of foreign languages often claim that they feel schizophrenic: they have a different personality in each language. Indeed, second language acquisition is sometimes described as a birthing process.

Is this an apt metaphor? Do you ever feel like a different person when speaking a foreign language? Discuss with a partner.

What are the implications of this depiction of the language learning process for your students? One is that they will make lots of errors, though many errors will automatically fall away as the process moves forward. Once students know the rudiments of the code, you should encourage them to correct their own and even each other's errors. Whether they attend to errors or not, however, you should avoid intervening every time a mistake occurs on the assumption that, unless you head it off, an error will infect the student's grammar like a virus. As students try to communicate in the foreign language, two cognitive channels are open. They are aware of the rules to some extent, at some level of consciousness, and they possess the communicative competence needed to send and receive messages in actual situations. Occasionally, as they get used to processing, as they focus on the message rather than its form, wires get crossed and mistakes occur. These are mistakes in performance, and they do not indicate a lack of awareness of the rules. Nor does the existence of such mistakes suggest that correcting them will have a remedial or prophylactic effect. Sometimes simply drawing students' attention to the problem and inviting repair is enough to get it fixed (see below).

Some of your students will plateau. That is, they will learn only as much as they have to to survive the course, and that level of accomplishment will fall short of the communicative competence they are capable of. This lack of achievement may not be cognitively motivated. While the process by which a language grows can take a long time and, in a sense, never reach fruition, learning a foreign language in the classroom comes equipped with tests and time limits and, sometimes, unrealistic expectations. Therefore, students' lack of accomplishment can often be traced to the unnatural circumstances in which their learning takes place.

What can the classroom contribute?

As hedged about with limitations and tests as courses are, as unnatural as the university setting is, it is still possible to align the classroom with the real world. Here are ten course characteristics that many progressive language teachers would endorse. While few stem directly from the research, eight are consistent with the notion that foreign languages are social phenomena and two reflect the differences between children and adults as learners, in other words, the shift in learning strategies those differences trigger.

Input

Although there is little evidence that input alone determines acquisition, input is obviously necessary. Given the usual time limits, courses that stress grammar rules and drill, or for that matter, communicative speaking practice, are unlikely to be successful unless they include both focused and extensive listening. Focused listening requires learners to listen for specific information, possibly even grammatical information like inflectional affixes. Extensive listening requires them to grasp a few key details or the main idea. Focused listening asks them to pay attention to discrete features and ignore meaning. Extensive listening asks them to adopt a top-down strategy to distinguish elements of meaning. In both cases, students should be prepared for the activity by being assigned beforehand a clear task to perform while they are listening and a form, a grid, a set of true/false statements, whatever, to go along with and support the task. For example, you can create listening exercises by taking a cartoon sequence, from which the words have been eliminated, and telling the story in the foreign language. The pictures reinforce the students' understanding of the aural input.

Authenticity

Always try to use the language as naturally as possible when you are talking to students. Although slowing down may seem to make the message more comprehensible, that is not always the case, because when you slow down you also distort the subtle shifts in pronunciation that normally occur in naturally paced speech. These shifts (some sounds are systematically elided with neighboring sounds, for example) are governed by rules called phonological rules, and learning them, at some level of consciousness, is part of what language students have to do. You may have to simplify your language by using a lexicon that is within the reach of the students and sticking to syntax they can understand or safely ignore, but you should avoid distorting the phonology or altering the stress patterns or speaking too loud. Simply saying the same thing in a variety of ways—paraphrasing—is often a better technique than doctoring the input.

As soon as possible, students should hear and see authentic samples of the language. Radio broadcasts, videos, magazine articles, etc. can be used effectively if the language is not too complex and the context is clear.

Suggestion for Action

Where can you find authentic aural samples (not commercial tapes) of the language you teach that are not too difficult for intermediate students?

What about written samples?

List five criteria you would apply in selecting such samples. How would you use the samples in class?

Context

Whenever possible, introduce a language sample in context; that is, give the students contextual clues to help them understand it. These include titles, illustrations, subheadings, outlines, review questions (that the students read before they confront the text), timelines, and semantic webs. Topicality is also a consideration. It aids understanding if the students are already familiar with the topic. In their interaction with the text, the students will depend as much on context as on language, but the distinction between linguistic and extralinguistic clues is not absolute. Extralinguistic clues enable students to reorganize their previously acquired background information to include new cultural information or create new frames of reference. For example, if your students of Italian conceptualize food with reference to the culture of Michigan's Upper Peninsula or the Great Plains, they may have to expand their frame of reference to include gnocchi, tiramisu, and pickled eel. More to the point, contextualization draws the line between language (the internal code) and usage that students must breach if they are going to meet criteria of functional proficiency. Learning the bits and pieces, even learning how they form combinations, will not help students choose the right words for the occasion. Learning to understand the language from the context and to read the context from the language will at least demonstrate what is socially appropriate.

Communication

Ask the students to communicate real information for a real purpose whenever possible (Scott, 1996; Swain, 1985) and avoid meaningless repetition, fill-in exercises, and the like. Obviously, the vacuous rehearsal of speech is less attractive for students than actual speaking. Speaking is not just moving sounds around, any more than playing the piano is just hitting the notes. Real communication activities require nuance and interpretation; they often have an outcome. As soon as your students are ready, have them use the language to get an answer, solve a problem, or play a game. Ask them to do that, whenever possible, in circumstances that resemble real communicative situations (Lee and VanPatten, 1995).

Many teachers like "information gap" exercises (Doughty and Pica, 1986). In this case, students work in pairs, and each is given half the information (for example, half a map, grid, or list) needed to complete a task. The pair then talk to each other until they both possess the full complement of information. It's true that, since most of your students will have the same native language (English), they won't really have to communicate with each other in Swahili, Dutch, or Indonesian. Therefore, the activity is still artificial. Nonetheless, it comes closer to real communication than fill-in exercises or dialogues.

Task

If you can, ask the students to perform tasks in and through the language instead of merely rehearsing it (Long and Crookes, 1992). A task might involve solving a word problem, creating a crossword puzzle, making a video, preparing a presentation, or drawing up a plan. Such tasks take the students' minds momentarily off form, and they will make mistakes, but they also concentrate their minds wonderfully on what they know, and need to learn, and on communicating. Tasks also hold students' interest longer than grammar exercises.

Suggestion for Action

Working with a partner, develop an information-gap task for students in your classes.

First, identify a context (a game? a social event? an historic event?) and create a visual aid (a map? a diagram? a web?) that the students can complete as they secure information from their partners.

What kind of time limit would you give this task?

Collaboration

Whenever possible, ask the students to perform tasks in pairs or small groups (Pica and Doughty, 1985); in other words, ask them to collaborate on a task. This is not the place to go into cooperative learning in any detail, but if students work together they inevitably use several types of language. They have to structure their work, as well as discussing the substance of the task and reporting the outcome. They learn from each other. Designing tasks that require collaboration is not easy. Essentially, such tasks should require a pooling of resources, they should have time limits, and they should have an outcome. Tasks that are poorly defined or open ended usually don't work; tasks that give the students 30 minutes to come up with one or two suggestions to report to the class do.

Integration

"Integration" refers to the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a single activity, much the way the four skills are constantly being employed among educated adults. It also refers to the integration of "content" —material in the foreign language from courses such as biology and management—into the foreign language curriculum. University students often find it instructive to read material whose content they already know. Knowledge of the topic helps in construing the text. Moreover, their primary aim in studying the language in the first place may be to read and write such material (Frantzen, 1995). Therefore, if your students are in business administration courses, make it a point to lift articles from foreign language publications devoted to market trends and the like, and

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particularly the graphs and tables that accompany them, and create tasks requiring students to summarize or evaluate their content.

Consciousness

Although grammar teaching is minimized in many current approaches, many approaches also minimize the needs of university students. University students often need grammar and benefit from attention to form more than purely naturalistic learners. Because of their metalinguistic awareness, university students are quicker to grasp the prescriptive rules associated with standard usage than students for whom fluency and informal communication are primary aims, and they are often more comfortable with grammar study. They may also see grammar as a shortcut to proficiency; that is, they may be able to turn rules into utterances, or to actualize the rules, more easily than the average student.

A small distinction: "attention to form" does not imply a particular approach to the teaching of grammar. Suggesting that attention to form has a role does not mean that you should take a traditional, deductive approach to grammar teaching and, for example, require students to memorize rules. Quite the opposite. As Rutherford (1987) and others suggest, you can adopt an inductive approach and insinuate grammar into the routine of a course, particularly into conferencing with students on their compositions. Sometimes, if the students know the rules, though they may not apply them consistently in production, raising their awareness is all that is needed. Asking them to think through the rules in the context of an effort to express themselves clearly has a bigger payoff than teaching the rule in isolation.

Feedback

While many methodologists give corrective feedback short shrift, there is evidence to support its usefulness (Lightbown, 1985, 1991; Swain, 1985). In general, feedback should take the indirect form of global responsiveness to student output. You should react to the content of student utterances whenever possible, not merely the form. Your response is a useful comprehension check for students, and on the affective level it shows that you are attending to their output.

One feedback technique for oral discourse is to paraphrase a student's utterances and in so doing, model the correct forms. Another is to ask students for clarification of their utterances—effectively, to ask them for paraphrases of their own. In providing you with paraphrases, in trying to come up with the clearest possible reformulations, they inevitably attend to issues of form. Both techniques can be adapted for conferencing around student compositions or journal entries, but be careful not to overwhelm the discourse.

As for written responses to student writing, notes in the margin requesting clarification are as effective as finely tuned feedback on grammar and mechanics, even when grammatical and mechanical criteria are applied. If you insist on a more pedantic approach, however, provide minimal clues as to error type and ask the student to come up with corrections unaided (Lalande, 1982).

In other words, avoid feeding students the correct forms and reinforcing their dependence on you as a constant monitor. Gradually teaching them to depend less on you and more on themselves is what language teaching is all about.

Suggestion for Action

Working with a partner, have a conversation, preferably in a common foreign language, about family life, a recent film, or a matter of public interest.

Instead of reacting to each statement your partner makes, try reflecting it. That means summarizing it in your words, not simply repeating it. Try to do it in a relaxed, thoughtful way, not a mechanical, automatic way. Be patient.

After five minutes, ask yourself: how does it feel? Could you adapt this technique as a way of responding to your students' attempts at conversation?

Culture

Languages are cognitive systems, but they also express ideas and transmit cultural values (Kramsch, 1993). On the linguistic level, issues of usage can be resolved by recourse to what a native speaker would say, to a social or historical context, to cultural signifiers. The media through which culture is expressed and transmitted (e.g., popular books, newspapers, radio and television programs, films) are rich sources of information about the language and its use. On another level, they have a leavening effect on language study, and of course they offer perspective, insight, and pleasure. Few students can resist Italian movies, French comic strips, or Spanish soap operas. Nor are they immune to examples of the so-called higher culture, though the average student will not be easily seduced by Wagner, Eisenstein, or Proust. Culture in all its forms is also fun to exploit for linguistic development (Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, contains suggestions).

All things considered, the classroom's future as a setting for language learning is not as bleak as it appeared a few years ago, when it seemed a poor alternative to naturalistic acquisition. Instruction, or guided learning, has a role to play despite the battering it has received from the apostles of laissez-faire, input-is-all language instruction. Highly educated students can profit from guided work on the language even while the language is itself working on them, naturally and inexorably. In essence, all of the suggestions in this section are related. Language learning today requires active participation, much the way language teaching requires creative materials development and imaginative planning. Like materials development, language learning also requires structure, hard work, and application. Though informal acquisition during a freewheeling junior year abroad still exerts its appeal, students can get a lot of the basics out of the way before they leave.

The question is: which classroom activities are most useful for such students? Learning to create a supportive, stimulating environment and to make reasonable demands is

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not easy. Nor is learning, ultimately, to stand back and let the learner take charge. But until we know more about language, about how it is stored and how it is activated, and about foreign language development as distinct from native language acquisition, that is about as much as we can ask.

Conclusion

As promised, this tour of the horizon has ranged far afield. As promised, it has not overreached in an attempt to be comprehensive. Instead, it has looked at only a few issues that have entered the debate on second language acquisition, and it has traced their relevance to foreign language learning. In some ways these processes are the same, and in some ways they are different.

In principle, it is a good idea to avoid the reductionism that distinguishes foreign language learning, or for that matter second language acquisition, from language acquisition in general. Although we don't know with any precision how similar these processes are, we know that children are remarkably accomplished and remarkably efficient in their language development. Whether or not the powerful cognitive advantage that children have survives childhood, many adult language learners are easily frustrated when they confront the learning of languages in a formal setting.

It is also a good idea to avoid the reductionism that says that all language learning, regardless of age, is basically the same. Adults have documented advantages that children don't enjoy. For one thing, they are experienced organizers of their learning environment, and they are good at setting goals. If it is true that the LAD atrophies with age, and that language learning partakes of general learning strategies, then adults' strategies should put them ahead of the game. They are also fully developed cognitive beings, so they can manage all the systematicity that eludes children, and they are knowers of a language in which they have achieved a degree of literacy. All of these abilities predispose them to do well in the institutional settings where formal learning takes place, as studies such as Snow and Hofnagel-Höhle (1978) suggest.

Whatever their advantages, however, the flight these learners have boarded is going to be a bumpy one. At the beginning, they will formulate assumptions about the language that seem to come out of thin air, and sometimes out of left field, though many of them are traceable to English. During the trip, they will sometimes make rapid, seemingly mysterious gains, and sometimes fall back miserably. There will be moments when the language comes together, and there will be moments when it comes apart before their very eyes. Sometimes hard work pays off, and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes just letting the language sink in slowly, merely contemplating it and not attending to any aspect in particular, is the best advice. The mind needs time to sort it out and doesn't want more input. But many of your students will also find a comfortable altitude and stay there for the journey. Many will achieve only what they have to to satisfy the language requirement without destroying their

GPA, while others will see it as a life-enhancing adventure. Whatever their attitude, or altitude, you may find a way to talk to them about it, or at least prepare them for bumpy spells and turbulence.

In any case, you have important roles to play. You are course manager, course designer, mentor, monitor, examiner, example, exemplar, and guide. The modules in this series offer numerous suggestions for you to consider in assuming these roles, for teaching all the skills and assessing student achievement. This one has offered a few modest proposals. Their essence is that, while you can't neglect accuracy, your job is to align language learning with language acquisition and the real world and to make it communicative.

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Teaching Learning Strategies to Language Students

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Why Teach Learning Strategies? 3

Teachable Learning Strategies 5

How to Teach Learning Strategies 6

- Guiding principles 6
- Instructional framework 6
- Learning strategy activities 7
- Model lesson 15

Summary 18

References 20

Suggested Additional Reading 23

Table 1 24

Introduction

This module is for foreign language instructors who are interested in finding out how learning strategies can help their students become better language learners. Probably all language teachers have wondered why some of their students leap ahead in language learning while others plod slowly no matter how hard the teacher works to make the language class interesting and enjoyable. Part of this difference between more and less effective language learners may be due to differences in ability, motivation, and/or effort. But an important factor seems to be knowledge about and skill in using "how to learn" techniques—or learning strategies.

Some students may attribute their lack of success in learning a language to an inherent trait such as ability or language aptitude—students may tell us, "I'm just not good at languages." When students have a low estimation of themselves as language learners and use this explanation to account for their lack of success in the language classroom, their negative conviction becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, when teachers can convince such students that their lack of success is due to the *way* they go about language learning rather than to internal forces beyond their control, students generally want to know what they can do to become a better language learner. This is the point at which teachers can demonstrate some of the learning strategies that students might want to learn how to use.

Learning strategies are the thoughts that students have and actions that they can take to assist their comprehension, recall, production, and management of their language learning. For example, a student might use cognates or other clues to guess at the meanings of unfamiliar words in the target language. Or a student might plan in advance for a role play by identifying and practicing some of the key phrases that might be useful for a particular context. Although good language learners are better users of strategies than less effective students in their approach to developing proficiency in a new language, less effective students can learn how to improve their performance by using appropriate learning strategies. This module will explain what you as the teacher can do to share the secrets of good language learners with all of your students.

The next section of this module summarizes the research basis and rationale for teaching learning strategies to language students. Following is a brief section providing a list of teachable language learning strategies and their definitions. This is followed by a section providing a framework and instructional principles for implementing instruction in learning strategies, including sample learning strategies activities which can be adapted for any language. The last section of this module summarizes the major points and following the References, there are some suggestions for additional reading.

Why Teach Learning Strategies?

The intent of learning strategies instruction is to help all students become better language learners. When students begin to understand their own learning processes and can exert some control over these processes, they tend to take more responsibility for their own learning. This self-knowledge and skill in regulating one's own learning is a characteristic of good learners, including good language learners. Research with both first and second language learners is revealing some of the ways of thinking that guide and assist an individual's attempts to learn more effectively.

Good language learners are more strategic than less effective language learners. By "strategic," I mean that they are better able to figure out the task requirements and are flexible in their approach to solving any problems they encounter while working on the task. Unsuccessful language learners, on the other hand, while not necessarily unaware of strategies, have difficulty in choosing the best strategy for a specific task, and often have a limited variety of strategies in their repertoire.

Students who are more strategic learners are more motivated to learn (Paris, 1988) and have a higher sense of self-efficacy, or confidence in their own learning ability (Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman and Pons, 1986). That is, strategic students perceive themselves as more able to succeed academically than students who do not know how to use strategies effectively. Students who expect to be successful at a learning task generally are successful, and each successful learning experience increases motivation.

In order to continue to be successful with learning tasks, students need to be aware of the strategies that led to their success. Awareness of one's own thinking processes is generally referred to as *metacognition* or *metacognitive awareness*. The value of this type of self-knowledge is that it leads to reflection, to planning how to proceed with a learning task, to monitoring one's own performance on an ongoing basis, and to self-evaluation upon task completion. In other words, it leads to self-regulation of one's learning. Students with greater metacognitive awareness understand the similarity between the current learning task and previous ones, know the strategies required for successful learning, and anticipate success as a result of knowing "how to learn" (Paris and Winograd, 1990).

One study that investigated differences between more and less effective language learners focused on listening comprehension (O'Malley, Chamot, and Küpper, 1989). Significant differences in strategy use were found between good and poor listeners in three major areas. Effective listeners: (1) monitored their comprehension by continually asking themselves if what they were hearing made sense; (2) related new information to their prior knowledge by recalling relevant personal experiences or things they had studied; and (3) made inferences about unknown words or information.

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Similar research with both high school and college foreign language students found differences between more and less effective learners in the number and range of strategies used, in how the strategies were used, and in whether they were appropriate for the task (Chamot, 1993; Chamot and Küpper, 1989).

These studies indicate that task difficulty and level of language proficiency have a major effect on the strategies that students use. For example, some strategies used by beginning level effective language learners are used less often by the same learners when they reach intermediate level classes, probably because they have had to develop new strategies to meet the requirements of more challenging language tasks. In addition, the difficulty of the task seems to be related to whether students even try to use learning strategies. For example, if a task is relatively easy, students can perform it much as they would in their native language, without conscious attention to strategies. On the other hand, if the task is much too difficult, even good learning strategies cannot overcome the learner's lack of knowledge and/or language proficiency.

Conclusions about strategic differences between good and poor language learners suggest that explicit knowledge about the characteristics of a task and about appropriate strategies for the task's completion are major determiners of language learning effectiveness. When students do not understand a task (what they are supposed to do) and cannot choose an appropriate strategy to help them understand and complete the task, they seem to fall back on a largely implicit approach to learning in which they use habitual or preferred strategies without analyzing the requirements of the particular task.

If good language learners know how to use learning strategies to assist their language performance, can teachers help less effective language learners by teaching them how to use some of the same effective strategies?

In fact, researchers and teachers in native language contexts have been quite successful in improving student performance through learning strategy instruction in areas such as reading comprehension, writing, and problem-solving (see, for example, Derry, 1990; El-Dinary, Brown, and Van Meter, 1995; Gagné, Yekovitch, and Yekovitch, 1993; Harris and Graham, 1992; Palincsar and Brown, 1985, 1986; Pressley and Associates, 1990; Pressley and Harris, 1990; Silver and Marshall, 1990; Wood, Woloshyn, and Willoughby, 1995).

Second-language researchers have also investigated a variety of language learning tasks, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing. While much additional research remains to be done with language learning strategies, many of the studies carried out to date report that instruction in learning strategies can, if properly conducted, help students increase their language learning ability and confidence (see, for example, Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, and Wilson, 1981; Rost and Ross, 1991; Rubin, Quinn, and Enos, 1988; Thompson and Rubin, 1993).

In one study of learners of English as a second language, high school students from various language backgrounds were randomly assigned to a control group or to one of two groups receiving different combinations of learning strategies instruction. After two weeks of classroom strategy instruction for about one hour daily, the posttest revealed significant differences favoring the students taught learning strategies for the transactional speaking task (giving a one-minute oral presentation), and significant differences on some of the daily listening comprehension tests (viewing a mini-lecture on video) (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Küpper, 1985).

A similarly designed study was conducted with Arabic-speaking students at a university intensive English program, in which students received different types of strategies instruction for vocabulary learning. On posttest, the group receiving a combination of strategies designed to provide depth of processing through visual, auditory, and semantic associations had a significantly higher rate of recall (Brown and Perry, 1991).

Studies with high school and college learners of Japanese, Russian, or Spanish indicated generally strong correlations between the use of language learning strategies and students' level of confidence in their own language learning ability (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, Carbonaro, and Robbins, 1993; Chamot, Robbins, and El-Dinary, 1993). In addition, most students reported that they found the strategies helpful and teachers indicated that strategies instruction was especially beneficial for average students. Research currently in progress is building on these studies of foreign language learning strategies by fine-tuning teaching techniques for integrating instruction in language learning strategies into the foreign language curriculum.

Important reasons for teaching learning strategies in the second language classroom include the following:

- Strategic differences between more and less effective learners have been documented through research in both first and second language contexts. Better learners have greater metacognitive awareness, which helps them select appropriate strategies for a specific task.
- Most students can learn how to use learning strategies more effectively.
- Many strategies can be used for a variety of tasks, but most students need guidance in transferring a familiar strategy to new problems.
- Learning strategy instruction can increase student motivation in two main ways: by increasing students' confidence in their own learning ability and by providing students with specific techniques for successful language learning.
- Students who have learned how and when to use learning strategies become more self-reliant and better able to learn independently.

Teachable Learning Strategies

Learning-strategies researchers have generated many lists of strategies reported by students. While there is a great deal of agreement on most of these strategies, there are also differences in strategy names and descriptions. These differences may be related to different disciplines (for example, a math strategy might not be applicable to writing) or simply to different perspectives on the part of researchers. By working on a number of foreign language research studies and observing the classrooms of many different high school and college foreign language teachers, my colleagues and I have identified a set of strategies that teachers can actually teach and that students find useful in learning another language. This set of learning strategies appears in Table 1. (See Table 1 at the end of the text.)

How to Teach Language Learning Strategies

In this section I will suggest some guiding principles for teaching language learning strategies, describe an instructional framework which language teachers have found useful, and provide examples of learning strategies activities that have been field-tested in foreign language classrooms.

Guiding principles

In general, teachers should:

- build on strategies students already use by finding out their current strategies and making students aware of the range of strategies used by their classmates;
- integrate strategy instruction with regular lessons, rather than teaching the strategies separately from language learning activities;
- be explicit—name the strategy, tell students why and how it will help them, and when to use it;
- provide choice by letting students decide which strategies work best for them;
- plan continuous instruction in language learning strategies throughout the course; and
- use the target language as much as possible for strategies instruction.

Instructional framework

An effective plan for integrating learning strategies instruction into a language curriculum is the framework originally designed for English language learners as the instructional sequence for the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), which integrates content, language, and learning strategies (see Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). This instructional framework consists of five stages: Preparation (eliciting students' prior knowledge about and use of learning strategies); Presentation (introducing new strategies); Practice (active applications of new strategies to language learning tasks); Evaluation (student self-evaluation of the strategies practiced); and Expansion (connecting strategies taught to new tasks and contexts). This is a general sequence that can be modified according to student needs. For example, a teacher might plan to teach two or three strategies for reading comprehension as follows:

1. Preparation: Ask what strategies students are already using when they read—both in English and in the target language. Make a class list.
2. Presentation 1: Model and discuss a reading strategy that most students are not yet using in the target language.
3. Practice 1: Have students practice the strategy with a reading text.
4. Presentation 2: Model and discuss another useful reading strategy that can help students.
5. Practice 2: Have students practice the second strategy with a similar reading text.
6. Evaluation: Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy and explain reasons for any difficulties they may have had in applying the strategies.
7. Expansion: For homework, have students apply one or both strategies to a different type of reading text (e.g., a newspaper article instead of a story) and report on their experiences in the next class.

This sequence integrates easily with any language lesson. The strategy instruction is explicit, meaning that the teacher discusses the value of learning strategies, gives names to strategies, and explains to students how the strategies can help them and when to use them. There are opportunities for students to practice the strategies, share strategies with classmates, and reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies. Finally, students are provided with opportunities to transfer the strategies to new tasks.

Learning strategy activities

In this section I will share learning strategy activities for each phase of the instructional framework, and then provide a model lesson that exemplifies all five phases. These suggestions are meant to help you get started teaching language learning strategies. Naturally, you will need to adapt them to the language and levels you teach and integrate them with the topics in your curriculum.

Sample preparation activities

The purpose of these activities is to help students discover their prior knowledge about language learning strategies. I suggest starting with quite concrete language activities such as vocabulary learning and studying for tests, because virtually all language students have developed some strategies for these tasks.

1. *Vocabulary strategies*. Divide students into pairs or groups of three. Have each group brainstorm their individual techniques for learning vocabulary and record their ideas (in the target language if possible). Then have each group number the vocabulary learning strategies according to usefulness (1= most useful, 2=next most useful, etc.). Compile the results for the class, grouping their strategy descriptions under a strategy name (see Table 1). Ask individual students to explain why the strategies they have chosen are effective for them. If there are disagreements on the usefulness of a particular strategy, encourage students to reflect on possible reasons. (For instance, differences in strategy preferences could be due to the type of vocabulary, the purpose for learning it, and/or the learning style of the individual.)

2. *Test-taking strategies*. When reviewing the results of a test, after each section ask students to describe how they studied for that section and how they decided on the best answer for each question. For example, if the section had grammar exercises, what did students do to understand and apply the grammar paradigms? If the section was a passage to read and answer questions, did students do anything to prepare in advance for increasing their reading comprehension, and how did they operate to understand the selection as they were reading it? If the section involved listening comprehension, how did students prepare and what did they think while listening to the teacher or tape? After the test, a class discussion of the learning strategies reported by different students can inform students about a variety of ways to use test-taking strategies. And the teacher, of course, acquires important information about the students' current approaches to learning.

3. *Interviews and questionnaires*. Other types of preparation activities could include interviews, questionnaires, and journals. For example, you could interview one or more students about their learning strategies immediately after they have completed a learning task. Even better is to videotape a group of students as they are working, then play back the videotape and ask them what they were thinking as they worked (this technique is called stimulated recall).

   Another type of interview is to have students think aloud as they are working on a task. Their thoughts can be noted down by a partner for sharing with the class later on. Thinking aloud about an assignment can also be part of homework. In this case, students are asked to use a tape recorder to record descriptions of their thought processes.

If students require more guidance to record their current language learning strategies, you can ask them to fill in a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire can include items such as:

1. When I listen to information in [target language] I try to focus on the important ideas, rather than getting hung up on every little word.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

2. When I'm reading in [target language] and I encounter a new word, I try to make an intelligent guess based on the context.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

3. When I'm having a conversation in [target language] and I can't recall the exact word I want, I just substitute a similar word or expression.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

4. When I write something in [target language], I read through it to see if I've expressed my ideas clearly, and I correct any mistakes I may have made.

   Usually Sometimes Rarely

The results of interviews and questionnaires can be used to initiate class discussions about the most and least used learning strategies reported, the types of learning strategies reported for each type of task, and reasons why students choose one strategy over another. Finally, if students are keeping journals about their learning experiences you will probably find comments in them that you can respond to by asking, "How did you solve that problem? Can you describe the learning strategy you used?" (See discussion of journals under "Sample evaluation activities.")

Sample presentation activities

The purpose of the presentation phase of learning strategies instruction is to provide students with a clear understanding of why, how, and when language learning strategies can help them. Start by reminding students of the different learning strategies that they reported during the preparation phase. Explain that you would like to show them some strategies that you have found especially helpful with challenging language learning tasks. Tell students that you will think aloud as you do a language task so that they can "see" how you are using the strategies. Here are some suggestions for ways in which you might model strategies for: (1) asking for and listening to directions; (2) reading a folk tale; and (3) writing about a personal experience. Try to do as much of the think-aloud in the target language as possible. You may need to pre-teach some of the words you will be using, such as *learning strategy, plan, monitor, evaluate,* and the names of other strategies you plan to demonstrate.

1. *Listening to directions*. Set the scene by describing an instance that you have experienced in asking for directions in the target language. For example, you might tell about an adventure you had as a student in France when you got hopelessly lost because you could not completely understand the directions given to you by the concierge. Then explain how you prepared for your next request for directions and how you negotiated the conversation so that you achieved your goal. Ask one of your students (or another instructor) to take the part of the concierge and provide a script for the concierge's side of the conversation. Think aloud as you *plan*, *monitor*, and *evaluate* your understanding of the directions. Your think-aloud might go something like this:

   "Let's see, I'd better do some *planning* before I even ask for directions. Hmm, maybe I should rehearse the questions I'm going to ask and try to anticipate the types of answers the concierge might give. I should start by asking if the museum is far (she'll probably say that it isn't, even if it really is!), if I can walk there (she'll say 'of course,' since she walks all over Paris), and how long it would take (I'll have to listen carefully here, because if it's more than fifteen minutes I'd rather take the Métro). If it is far, I need a whole new set of questions about which Métro station, changing lines, where to get off..."

   Having completed your planning, begin the role play with the "concierge." Interrupt the conversation from time to time to demonstrate *monitoring* your comprehension and what steps you take when you realize that you are not understanding something the concierge said. For example, you might say in an aside: "Wait a minute—I didn't quite get that. I'd better ask a *question for clarification*." Finally, in order to *evaluate* how well you grasped the directions, you might go over them to the concierge while tracing the route on a map.

   To sum up your presentation of strategies that could be used while listening, ask students to describe what you did, and name each strategy as they describe it. Ask students whether they have used any of the same strategies and to describe other strategies that could have been used.

2. *Reading a folk tale*. Share with students your own interest in this genre and then tell them that you would like to show them some of the strategies you use when reading a folk tale that help you really understand and enjoy it.

   Show an overhead with the title and first illustration of the folk tale. Model your pre-reading strategies. For example, you might say: "The first thing I do is to read the title. [Read it.] Hmm, this title makes me think that maybe this folk tale is about .... Now, let me look at the picture. [Describe the picture—your use of *imagery*.] Well, the picture gives me even more information about the folk tale. It reminds me of [describe your own *prior knowledge* about the topic revealed in the title and picture]. Well, I think this folk tale is going to be about [make a *prediction*]. Now that I've done some *planning*, I'm ready to start reading the story."

Show an overhead transparency with a paragraph or two of the folk tale (enlarge the type so that students can follow as you read). Model reading the first part of the story. You can read aloud or silently, indicating with your finger or a pointer where you are in the text. Stop when you reach places that present difficulties. Model the strategies you might use to solve these problems. For example, you might say, "Here's a word that I don't know. Let's see if I can make an *inference*—I'll read on to see if the context gives me a clue." As you continue to think aloud, use additional strategies such as *predicting*, *monitoring comprehension* ("Am I understanding this? Does it make sense?"), and *imagery* ("I can make a mental picture of what's happening in the story.").

After modeling for a few minutes, lead a discussion in which students describe the strategies you used. Be sure to name the strategies and explain to students when and how to use them.

3. *Writing about a personal experience*. You can also think aloud to demonstrate to students any aspect of the writing process, including pre-writing, composing, revising, and editing. For example, you can jot down notes or make a semantic map on an overhead transparency as you brainstorm during the pre-writing process. The major strategy you are demonstrating is *planning*, and you will probably also be demonstrating *using prior knowledge* as you recall information and events that you want to include in your writing. As part of *planning*, you will probably set a goal for writing, which will include identifying your audience.

Similarly, you can model composing by thinking aloud as you write on an overhead. The major strategy during composing is *monitoring production* with a focus on meaning rather than form. You might make remarks such as, "Is this what I want to say? Will the reader get my point?"

A number of strategies can be modeled during the revising phase of the writing process. You can demonstrate *cooperation* by asking a student or another instructor to respond constructively to your first draft. Other strategies that could be demonstrated are *planning*, *using prior knowledge*, *imagery*, *using resources*, and *substitution*.

During the editing phase you will continue to model the major strategy of *self-evaluation*, though this time the focus will be on form. An ideal strategy to demonstrate is *selective attention* to specific language mechanics such as agreement, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. As a final *self-evaluation* of the piece of writing, ask yourself, "Did I meet my goal?"

Model the part of the writing process that you wish students to practice (students will be overwhelmed if you try to model the entire process at once). Remember to conclude with a discussion of the strategies students observed, name the strategies, and explain when to use them.

Sample practice activities

After modeling some useful strategies for a particular language activity, have students practice one or two of the strategies with a similar activity. Students can practice the strategies on individual activities, but group activities work especially well. Students can practice using learning strategies with any type of classroom activity or with homework. The practice can be as simple as reminding students to use a particular strategy or combination of strategies before they begin an activity, or it can be a structured cooperative learning activity. Following are some examples of practice activities for vocabulary learning, reading comprehension, and role-playing.

1. *Vocabulary classification*. This activity can be done in groups or individually. The learning strategies practiced are *grouping* (or *classification*) and *imagery*. You can use predetermined vocabulary words or, preferably, have students themselves identify the words they need to learn (they will be using *selective attention* when they identify their own vocabulary words). Have students write each word or phrase on a separate card or strip of paper. Ask students to *group* or *classify* their word cards in any way that will facilitate learning. Some students may choose to group their words by semantic or grammatical category, others might group them according to personal criteria such as color or shape, positive, neutral, or negative attributes, etc. Once students have grouped their word cards, ask them to choose a descriptive title for each group and write it (perhaps in color) on a new card and place it on top of the stack of word cards in that category. The title card will serve as the identifier for each group.

   Now (or for homework) have students study one group of word cards at a time and use *imagery* to picture a scene or an event involving all of the words in the group. (Students may make any changes they wish to the composition of each group of word cards.) When satisfied that they have a good mental image involving their words, have them draw and write about the image, integrating the words from the group of word cards. The same procedure is followed with the other groups of vocabulary word cards.

2. *"Reciprocal Teaching" to improve reading comprehension*. Originally developed by Palincsar and Brown (1985), this approach can be adapted for foreign language instruction. In this activity students read a text, working in small groups and taking turns as discussion leader. First, students silently read a portion of the text (from a paragraph to a page, depending on language level). Then, the discussion leader models four reading comprehension strategies by: (1) *summarizing* the passage; (2) *asking questions* of the other group members; (3) *selectively attending* to any areas of difficulty, such as new words or structures; and (4) *predicting* what event or information will follow in the text. I like to add a fifth strategy at the beginning in which the discussion leader elaborates briefly on any personal *prior knowledge* relevant to the text passage.

   After the discussion, the group reads the next section silently and a different student becomes the discussion leader. This continues until each group member has had a turn. The goal of this group practice activity is for students to model effective reading strategies for each other and gain experience in using strategies that they can also use on their own.

3. *Role-playing*. All types of role-playing activities and simulations lend themselves to learning strategies practice. For example, you can provide two or more students with individual role-playing cards. All cards explain the setting of the role-play, such as arriving at a party, ordering in a restaurant, and the like. In addition to information about

the general setting, each student also receives particular information about the character each is to play. For example, the student playing the role of the guest arriving at the party is supposed to be very dressed up for a formal occasion, quite hungry, and anxious to impress the hosts. The information for the hosts indicates that they are casually dressed, barefoot, and anxious to get rid of the unexpected guest because they are so busy planning for the party, which is the *next* night.

Rather than rushing into the role-play, students should be given some time to practice *planning*. This will entail thinking through what could happen during the conversation (*predicting*) and accessing *prior knowledge* for appropriate greetings, comments, questions, and leave-taking formulas. Students may want to use *resourcing* to look up some of the relevant vocabulary or expressions they cannot immediately recall. Working on *planning* strategies before the role-play will help students become more confident and gain control over an open-ended conversation in the target language.

Subsequent practice sessions can focus on *monitoring* strategies to use during the actual role-play. Students can practice *self-monitoring* both their comprehension ("Did I understand what he just said?") and production ("She's giving me a peculiar look—did I just say something strange?"). When a problem is recognized, students can then try a number of problem-solving strategies such as: *questioning for clarification/verification* when something the other person says is not understood, *substituting* another word when the desired word cannot be remembered, making *inferences* based on context, gestures, and background knowledge; and *self-management* strategies such as changing the topic or using culturally appropriate conversational fillers to buy time to think what to say.

Similar practice activities can be designed for any of the activities described above in the section "Sample presentation activities." For example, students can practice one or more learning strategies during each phase of the writing process.

Sample evaluation activities

Evaluation is an important component of learning strategies instruction. As a teacher, you need to know how well students are using the strategies you have taught, and students also need to evaluate how well individual strategies work for them, which tasks benefit from the use of strategies, and whether they are using appropriate strategies. Activities which allow both evaluation by the teacher and student self-evaluation include class discussions, checklists, learning logs, and journals.

1 *Class discussions.* Discussions on learning strategies can encourage students to describe exactly how they used particular strategies and the results they obtained. If a student says that a learning strategy did not work for the task, ask why and ask other students if the strategy worked for them. You will probably find differences of opinion, which can lead to further discussion. The important thing is to have students reflect on their use of learning strategies and begin to identify their own repertoires of useful strategies. For beginning level students these discussions will need to be in English, but encourage them to use the target language to refer to the strategies themselves. With intermediate and

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advanced level students, you should conduct the learning strategies evaluation discussion completely in the target language.

2. *Learning strategy checklist*. A checklist can be used with all levels of language proficiency, as the checklist items can be written in very simple language (or in English for absolute beginners). Students check off the descriptions of strategies they used during a just-completed task. Examples of checklist items are:

   I focused on key words while I listened. [selective attention]

   I used the context to figure out meanings of new words. [inferencing]

   I planned what I might say in a role-play by recalling useful words and phrases. [using prior knowledge to plan]

   While I was writing I found other ways of expressing my ideas when I couldn't remember the exact words. [substitution]

   After students have completed their individual checklists, lead a class discussion in which they share examples of how they used each strategy they checked off.

3. *Learning logs*. Comments on how they used learning strategies can be included in learning logs in which students record their learning progress. For example, after students have written in their logs what they have learned, what they found easy, and what they found difficult, they can respond to prompts such as:

   The learning strategies I used for this task were______. I decided to use these learning strategies because ___________. (Strategy) worked well because ___________. (Strategy) did not work very well because ____________. Next time I have a task like this, I'll probably use these strategies: __________________________.

4. *Journals*. Reflections on learning strategies can be kept as a special journal, or students can add thir thoughts about learning strategies to journals they are already keeping. Writing reflective journals helps students understand their own learning processes and decide on the strategies that work best for them. If students are keeping interactive journals with you, then you can use their comments about learning strategies as an assessment of how well they are understanding the concept and how appropriately they are able to use the instructed strategies. These observations, together with comments on your own personal use of learning strategies, can be included as your response to what the students write.

Sample expansion activities

During the expansion phase of learning strategies instruction, students are asked to transfer the strategies they have been practicing to new tasks and different contexts. Since transfer of strategies to new settings is often difficult, it is important for students to practice transferring strategies as part of their learning strategies instruction. For example, you can ask your students to try out a reading strategy they know, such as *inferencing*, during a listening comprehension task. Then have them explain similarities and differences in using this strategy for each modality. Another strategy expansion activity is to have students use one or more strategies they have learned in their foreign language class in a different class. Again, they should report on the results. A third type of expansion activity is a learning strategies diary. Ask your students to keep a diary for a week in which they describe the learning strategies they use in all aspects of their lives, both academic and social. Keeping a diary helps students understand that learning strategies can be used for any type of task that presents a challenge.

Model lesson

This lesson shows how the instructional framework described above can be used to plan a lesson that includes learning strategies instruction. It is based on an original lesson developed by Esther Ain for her high school Spanish 3 class in Montgomery County, Maryland. The lesson I observed was conducted completely in Spanish and students discussed their learning strategies in the target language.

By the time the lesson is presented, students have already received initial strategy instruction for about three months through teacher modeling, discussion, and practice with the strategies included in this lesson. This is the first time students are asked to put all the reading comprehension strategies together in a single lesson.

* * * * *

Synopsis of *A Letter to God*, by Gregorio López y Fuentes

This story is about Lencho, a poor Mexican farmer whose crop of corn and beans is in desperate need of rain. He and his family are delighted when rain finally comes, but to his horror, the rain changes to enormous hailstones which completely destroy his crops. Lencho and his family are facing hunger and perhaps starvation, and they realize that their only hope is God's help. Although Lencho is a poor peasant, he does know how to write, so that night he writes a letter to God: "God, if you don't help me, I and my whole family will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos to plant again and to live on while the new harvest comes in, because the hail..." He addresses the letter to God and goes to the village post office to buy a stamp and mail his letter.

A post office employee notices the letter, laughs at the address—To God—and takes it to his boss, the Postmaster. He also laughs, but then becomes thoughtful and exclaims: "Faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter! I wish I could believe as he believes! I wish I could be so confident in God!" So the Postmaster decides that the undeliverable letter should be answered so as not to disillusion the writer. When he opens the letter, however, he sees that more than good will is needed for the answer. So he takes up a collection from post office employees and his friends, and manages to collect sixty pesos. He puts the money into an envelope with a note that just says "God," and mails it to Lencho.

Lencho goes to the post office the next Sunday to ask if a letter has arrived for him. The post office employee who had received the letter and the Postmaster are both watching for Lencho's reaction to the envelope containing sixty pesos. Lencho doesn't show the least surprise when he opens his letter—he is so confident in God's help—but he becomes angry when he counts the money. He can't believe that God has made a mistake or denied Lencho's request! He asks for paper and a pen, and immediately starts writing another letter. He seals it in an envelope, buys a stamp for it, and pushes it into the mail box. As soon as the letter falls into the mail box, the Postmaster rushes to open it. The letter says:

> God: Of the money I asked you for, only sixty pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I really need it—but don't send it through the post office because the people who work there are a bunch of thieves. —Lencho.

Preparation

1. The teacher provides some background information about the setting and characters of *A Letter to God*. The teacher asks students to predict what the story might be about based on the information given, the title, and their own background knowledge. Students' predictions are recorded on the board. Strategy check: "Why is it a good idea to *predict* what might happen in a story before you start to read?" (Types of answers expected are: predictions help you understand the story better; predicting helps you focus on the story as you read to see if your prediction is correct.)

2. Students work in groups to write down specific things they will pay *selective attention* to as they read. The teacher can assign different categories to each group, for example, one group can brainstorm about names of occupations they expect to find, another can write down adjectives describing people or places, etc. Strategy check: "How does *selective attention* help get you ready to read?" (Types of answers expected are: selective attention helps you remember some of the words or ideas that you will probably find in the story; selective attention gets you ready to focus on the main ideas in the story.)

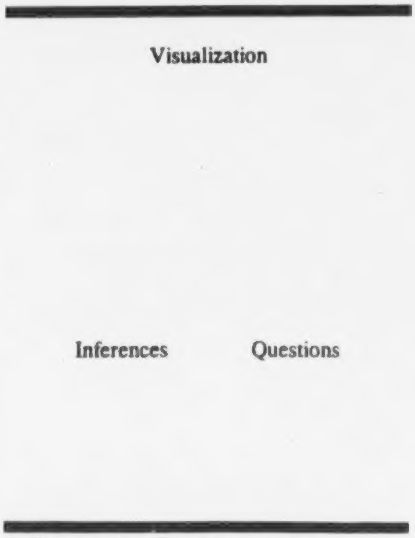
Presentation

1. The teacher provides each group with a blank transparency and marking pen, and asks students to write headings on their transparencies as shown in Figure 1.

2. Strategy check: Teacher asks students to identify and define the three strategies written on their transparencies.

Practice

1. Still in their groups, students read the first section of the story. The students share the *images* each made while reading, and develop a group drawing of their visualization on their transparency.



1 Strategies Transparency

2. As students encounter new words or phrases, they first try to make *inferences* about the meaning, writing their inferences on the transparency. The group then decides what *questions* they need to ask, and write them on the transparency.

Evaluation

1. The teacher places each group's transparency on the overhead projector and asks members of the group to describe their picture (expanding vocabulary as needed), tell how they made their inferences, and ask their questions to the rest of the class.

2. During the discussion of the group transparencies, the teacher probes students' understanding of the text with higher-level (i.e., more cognitively demanding) questions, asks them to predict what might happen next in the story, and has them reflect on how well the strategies worked for them.

Expansion

1. The teacher assigns the next part of the story for students to work on individually (in class or as homework) and complete sentences on a strategies work sheet as follows:

Before reading:

My prediction for this part of the story is...

I will pay selective attention to...

During reading:

My visualization is...

This reminds me of...

My inferences are...

Questions I want to ask are...

After reading:

My summary of this part of the story:

I checked my prediction. It was...

2. Students can compare their strategies work sheets and develop a class chart of some or all of their responses.

3. The teacher can use the strategies work sheets for informal assessment of students' reading comprehension, use of strategies, and written expression.

This lesson (reproduced here by permission of the author) is based on a Spanish lesson developed by Esther Ain, Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools, as part of the study conducted by the Georgetown University/Center for Applied Linguistics National Foreign Language Resource Center. The lesson plan model (Preparation, Presentation, Practice, Evaluation, and Expansion) is from The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)™, developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley.

* * * * *

Summary

This module has provided information that should help foreign language instructors introduce language learning strategies to their students. I began with a brief review of some of the research on strategic differences between more and less effective language learners and on efforts to teach language students how to learn more efficiently. This research discussion provides a rationale for incorporating learning strategies instruction into foreign language classrooms.

Next I described a fairly small number of learning strategies that are easy to teach and have been helpful to students. Because of the proliferation of strategy names in the literature, I have provided alternative and equivalent strategy names that you might prefer to use. For example, *selective attention* is often referred to as *scanning* when it refers to reading. Though I prefer strategy names that are more inclusive and can refer to more than one language modality, you might want to identify distinct strategy names for listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

In the last section I considered how to teach learning strategies. This section suggests some guiding principles for language learning strategies instruction, presents an instructional framework, and describes specific activities to teach language learning strategies within the instructional framework. These activities are intended to be used as models and springboards for your own creative instructional ideas, and will, I hope, provide some practical ideas for integrating language learning strategies instruction into your own teaching style. Finally, the model lesson plan provided here is meant to show you how a literature lesson can be enriched through explicit learning strategies instruction.

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Suggested Additional Reading

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Practical guidelines for integrating content, language, and learning strategies in the second language classroom.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

A rich collection of activities designed to develop learning strategies in each language modality (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Thompson, I. and J. Rubin. (1995). *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner.* 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Provides language learners with a rationale and specific procedures for applying learning strategies in each language modality.

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Table 1 Language Learning Strategies

Definition: Learning strategies are thoughts or actions that assist learning.

Metacognitive Knowledge and Strategies: Metacognitive knowledge includes awareness of the task demands, of one's own approach to learning and experiences with similar tasks, and of appropriate strategies for the task. Metacognitive strategies are executive processes used to plan, monitor, and evaluate a learning task.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Planning		
Advance organization	Preview Skim Gist	Previewing the main ideas and concepts of a text; identifying the organizing principle.
Organizational planning	Plan what to do Outline	Planning how to accomplish the learning task; planning the parts and sequence of ideas to express.
Selective attention	Listen or read selectively Scan Find specific information	Attending to key words, phrases, ideas, linguistic markers, types of information.
Self-management	Plan when, where, and how to study	Seeking or arranging the conditions that help one learn.
Monitoring		
Monitoring comprehension	Think while listening Think while reading	Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading.
Monitoring production	Think while speaking Think while writing	Checking one's oral or written production while it is taking place.
Evaluating		
Self-assessment	Check back Keep a learning log Reflect on what you learned	Judging how well one has accomplished a learning task.

Adapted from Chamot & O'Malley (1994).
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(Table 1 continues on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Cognitive Strategies: Interacting with what is to be learned by manipulating it mentally or physically.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Resourcing	Use reference materials	Using reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks.
Grouping	Classify Construct graphic organizers	Classifying words, terminology, quantities, or concepts according to their attributes.
Note-taking	Take notes on idea maps, T-lists, semantic webs, etc.	Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form.
Elaboration of prior knowledge	Use what you know Use background knowledge Make analogies	Relating new to known information and making personal associations.
Summarizing	Say or write the main idea	Making a mental, oral, or written summary of information gained from listening or reading.
Deduction/Induction	Use a rule/Make a rule	Applying or figuring out rules to understand a concept or complete a learning task.
Imagery	Visualize Make a picture	Using mental or real pictures to learn new information or solve a problem.
Auditory representation	Use your mental tape recorder Hear it again	Replaying mentally a word, phrase, or piece of information.
Making inferences/Predicting	Use context clues Guess from context Anticipate	Using information in an oral or written text to guess meanings of new items or predict information to come.
Substitution	Paraphrasing Circumlocution	Using a synonym, related term, or descriptive phrase when the exact word cannot be recalled.

Social/Affective Strategies: Interacting with other persons or using affective control to assist learning.

STRATEGY NAME	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION	STRATEGY DEFINITION
Questioning for clarification	Ask questions	Getting additional explanation or verification from a teacher or other expert.
Cooperation	Cooperate Work with classmates Coach each other	Working with peers to complete a task, pool information, solve a problem, get feedback.
Self-talk	Think positive! Talk yourself through it	Reducing anxiety by improving one's sense of competence.

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Alternative Assessment in the Language Classroom

Diane J. Tedick and Carol A. Klee
University of Minnesota

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

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Table of Contents

Rationale for Alternative Assessment 2

Definition of Alternative Assessment 3

- What are the challenges that come with this process? 3
- The benefits that accompany the challenges 4

Types of Alternative Assessment 4

- Creating tasks that lend themselves to alternative assessment 4
- Using checklists and rubrics for assessing student performance on various language tasks 6
- Encouraging reflection through self-assessment and peer assessment 17
- Portfolio assessment 28

Concluding Thoughts: Advice to New Instructors 31

References 32

Suggested Additional Reading 35

Tables 29

Rationale for Alternative Assessment

As foreign language teachers we are expected by our students and our institutions to assess our students' progress in language acquisition. In many large language programs, course supervisors provide standardized midterm and final exams that focus on specific areas of the curriculum, e.g., listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing. Ideally, such tests should reflect the goals of the course as well as the way in which instruction in these areas is delivered and practiced in class.

In addition to traditional measures of language competence, alternative assessments have been developed in response to current interest in learner-centered pedagogy. Proponents of learner-centered pedagogy believe that teachers and learners should share power and that learners should have more control over their educational process (cf. Nunan, 1988). In this sense, the primary goal of learner-centered instruction is to increase students' participation in the learning process by assisting them in establishing learning and self-improvement goals, choosing effective learning methods and strategies, and becoming involved in evaluating their own work and that of their peers. Learner-centered instruction thus implies that teachers must dedicate some class time to activities not normally observed in traditional language classes, such as teaching learners how to learn a language, how to make use of available tools and resources, how to use language learning strategies, and how to reflect on their own learning. Language learners assume responsibilities traditionally taken on solely by the instructor, including the evaluation of their own learning, as well as the provision of feedback to their classmates.

Assessment procedures in any educational process should be congruent with teaching procedures. In other words, assessment practices should *align* with classroom objectives and instruction. If you are implementing a learner-centered approach in your classroom, you should consider using alternative assessment procedures as a further means of carrying out the approach. In keeping with the premises of learner-centered pedagogy, these assessment procedures are based on the idea that students can learn to evaluate their own learning and, in turn, learn from that process. They reflect the belief that learners should be involved in determining criteria for successful completion of communicative tasks and should have the opportunity to assess themselves and their peers. In addition, just as learner-centered pedagogy emphasizes both the learning *process* and the *product*, various forms of alternative assessment give learners opportunities to reflect not only on their linguistic development, but also on their learning processes (i.e., what helps them learn and what might help them learn better). Assessment thus becomes more formative rather than summative. Learners can provide one another with feedback on their performance, for example reflecting on how well they performed a communicative task through group processing (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1993). Finally, multiple measures (traditional as well as alternative forms) of student achievement are used to provide a more comprehensive picture of student performance.

We would like to emphasize that time spent on teaching students how to evaluate their own work through self-reflection and how to evaluate the work of their peers is not time lost for instruction. On the contrary, by understanding the traits of effective writers and speakers, students internalize the traits and become more effective communicators. As Baron (1991) states: "When students internalize a definition of what quality means and can learn to recognize it, they have developed a very valuable critical ability. They can talk with . . . their teacher about the quality of their work and take steps to acquire the knowledge and skills required to improve it" (p. 190).

Definition of Alternative Assessment

What, then, is alternative assessment? The search for alternatives to traditional types of assessment that primarily rely on pencil and paper tests (often requiring mere repetition of memorized material) has generated several innovative approaches to assessment having names like "performance assessment," "alternative assessment," and "authentic assessment" (Hart, 1994). These types of assessment are characterized by tasks that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, and form part of the curriculum. In the field of language education, this type of assessment provides information on what students can actually *do* with language and their reflection on that process. Hancock (1994) has defined it as "an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the students' progress in language using non-conventional strategies" (p. 1). It is congruent with a learner-centered, communicative approach to language teaching. Alternative assessments are not only designed and structured differently from traditional tests, but are also graded or scored differently. Student performance is evaluated on the basis of clearly defined performance indicators, criteria, or standards that emphasize students' strengths instead of highlighting their weaknesses.

What are the challenges that come with this process?

As with any change from an accustomed approach, the use of alternative assessments can create special challenges. First and foremost, you will need to read about and practice extensively with various forms of alternative assessments so that you become comfortable with them. At the same time, you will need to prepare your students for the use of alternative assessments. Learners who are used to traditional, teacher-centered classrooms may be reluctant to assume new roles and responsibilities. They may also be skeptical that peers can provide them with feedback that will enhance their learning. Be sure to explain the rationale for alternative assessment fully to learners. Indeed, you may find it beneficial to engage students in discussion about assessment in general and to elicit from them their thoughts on more traditional forms of assessment and their limitations with respect to assessing specifically what learners can *do* with language. Such a discussion may help students to understand the need for alternative assessment in the language classroom in conjunction with other forms. You will also need to provide students with guidance and instruction on how to reflect on their performance and evaluate it and how to evaluate their peers. We will give you some concrete suggestions on how to go about this below.

We would also like to emphasize the need to create a cooperative learning environment before attempting to use alternative assessments. Students must be in a supportive environment if they are expected to reflect thoughtfully on their learning processes. They must also feel comfortable with one another to provide constructive and honest feedback on their peers' work. Otherwise, they will provide perfunctory comments on other students' work to avoid hurt feelings.

For these reasons, it is important to introduce the use of alternative assessments gradually. Not only do instructors need to take time to become accustomed to these assessments, learners also need to understand how they will benefit from them and how they can use them effectively. Alternative assessments can easily be used alongside the more traditional means of assessment common to foreign language classrooms. A combination of alternative measures and more traditional forms of assessment makes it possible for the instructor to compare the results of the various approaches, leading to a more comprehensive picture of students' language performance than either alternative or traditional measures alone would provide. To allow students to become accustomed to them, we recommend that the instructor begin using checklists, scales, and rubrics (described in a subsequent section) to evaluate students' performance. This allows students to see the teacher modeling their use and gives them time to become accustomed to such assessments. Once students are familiar with the use of checklists, scales, and rubrics for evaluation, they can gradually begin to assess their own learning and provide feedback to their peers. Alternative assessments are generally designed to be an integral part or a natural culmination of a sequence of learning activities, but their use by both teachers and students requires careful preparation and should be implemented gradually.

The benefits that accompany the challenges

Changing the way we think about assessment simultaneously changes the way we think about teaching and the way students think about learning (Hart, 1994). This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of alternative assessment—it focuses teachers' and students' attention on language *use*. Students become active participants in assessment activities that are designed to reveal what they can do with language rather than emphasizing their weaknesses. Teachers find alternative assessment techniques valuable in helping them to align instruction and assessment and in emphasizing for students communication for meaningful purposes.

Types of Alternative Assessment

Creating tasks that lend themselves to alternative assessment

Before introducing alternative assessment, it is essential to identify or design tasks that lend themselves to this type of assessment, i.e., those that provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they can actually do with language. This means that worksheets with fill-in-the-blanks exercises will not do the trick. Fortunately, many of the activities used in communicative classrooms lend themselves to this type of assessment:

Speaking/listening tasks — role-plays, interviews, group or individual presentations or demonstrations, debates, skits, information-gap activities

Writing tasks — journals, compositions, letters, e-mail correspondence or discussions, research reports

Reading tasks — skimming authentic texts for gist, scanning for specific information, comparing/contrasting articles or stories on the same topic written by different authors (or for different audiences)

As Baron (1991) states, "Many educators believe that performance-based assessments more closely represent the kinds of activities that we want our students to be able to undertake as members of society and that practicing for the assessment improves these valued skills and understandings" (p. 187). Certainly this is true in the case of language classrooms where students are learning to communicate in situations similar to those they will encounter in the "real world." Baron (1991) also points out that "There is a growing number of educators around the world who believe that there is little difference between an effective performance assessment task and an effective curriculum or learning task" (p. 191). This means that many of the activities that students engage in in a communicative classroom can be used as assessment tasks, although you should make sure to include a wide variety of task types that reflect real language use. "Implicit in this view of assessment is the need for the challenges we put before the student to better replicate the *interactive* challenges and standards of performance typically facing would-be language learners in the field as they 'do' their communication" (Wiggins, 1994, p. 71, emphasis in the original).

In designing communicative performance tasks for classroom use, it is important to keep in mind the notion of authenticity. Wiggins (1994, pp. 75-76) has proposed the following criteria to distinguish authentic from unauthentic forms of testing:

1. engaging and worthwhile problems or questions of importance . . .
2. faithful representation of the contexts facing workers in a field of study, or the real-life "tests" of adult life . . .
3. non-routine and multi-stage tasks, and real problems; recall or "plugging in" is insufficient or irrelevant . . .
4. tasks that require the student to produce a quality product and/or performance
5. transparent or de-mystified criteria or standards . . .
6. interaction between assessor and assessee . . .
7. provision for . . . concurrent feedback and the possibility of self-adjustment during the test . . .

Many tasks designed to develop communicative use of the second language fit these criteria.

In designing tasks, you should also consider authenticity in relation to the purpose of the task and its audience. Here we offer an example of a task that can be slightly altered to become more authentic. Imagine that students are engaged in a unit on Costa Rica (or any other target country). As an assessment at the end of the unit, the teacher decides to have students create travel brochures in the target language (TL) to demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned. Such a task asks that the students pretend to act as native speakers, which they clearly are not. Kramsch (1993) would argue that authenticity involves having students be who they are—learners of the TL. To revise the task somewhat with an eye toward greater authenticity, the teacher can have students create travel itineraries for a group of students who will be traveling to Costa Rica, the intent being to demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned by communicating it to other students.

Another example for the same unit would involve having students at the beginning of the unit write letters in the TL to various travel agencies, tourist bureaus, and "Chamber of Commerce" equivalents to indicate that they (1) are students of Spanish, (2) are studying about Costa Rica, and (3) are interested in receiving travel information in Spanish. Such a task has a real purpose and a real audience. An added benefit is that it will also lead to additional authentic materials for classroom use.

A final example of an authentic task for this instructional setting is to have students write to Costa Rican students about Minnesota (i.e., their home state), given what they have learned about Costa Rica. A letter written for this task might include, for example, a comparison between Minnesota's Boundary Waters and Costa Rica's Tortuguero National Park in terms of their environmental restrictions. These suggestions highlight the importance of creating tasks that involve students in using language for real communicative purposes and for real audiences.

Using checklists and rubrics for assessing student performance on various language tasks

The use of checklists and rubrics is central to alternative assessment. Whereas a checklist simply provides an indication of whether a specific criterion, characteristic, or behavior is present, a rubric provides a measure of quality of performance on the basis of established criteria.

Checklists

Checklists are often used for observing performance or behavior in order to keep track of a student's progress or work over time. They can also be used to determine whether students have met established criteria on a task. Below is an example of a speaking task and a sample checklist (see Fig. 1) that might be used to check whether students meet the criteria needed to complete the task successfully.

Task description. For a unit on Hispanics in the United States, students are exploring issues related to Hispanics in Minnesota. They are instructed to make contact with a native Spanish speaker who has immigrated to Minnesota (teacher provides a list of resources for making contact). Students are to conduct a short interview with this individual and report back to the class. In an oral presentation, they are to (1) briefly describe the interviewee (gender, age, place of birth, occupation, etc.); (2) explain what brought him/her to Minnesota; (3) describe at least one challenge the interviewee has faced or faces in Minnesota; (4) describe how this individual maintains a connection to his/her heritage; and (5) describe one item of interest that came out of the interview. Students are told that they will need to speak for a minimum of three minutes and that they are not to read to the class and can only refer to minimal notes while presenting. They are advised to rehearse, but not to memorize. A checklist for assessing students' completion of the task components might look like Figure 1. (See Figure 1 at the end of the text.)

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Brown and Yule (1983) suggest a checklist-type scoring matrix for use with information-gap activities. The intention is to assess the speaker's communicative effectiveness. The first step is to select or create an information-gap task in which a speaker must describe or provide instructions to a listener, who follows the instructions or completes some task based on the description. For example, a speaker must explain to a listener how to assemble a mincer having five parts or components. The listener has the various parts of the mincer in front of him and is required to assemble the parts on the basis of the speaker's instructions. The speaker must be seated in such a way so that she cannot see what the listener is doing. The speaker begins by identifying the first part, then the second part and explains their relationship to one another, or how they fit together. She continues in this manner until all five parts are identified and their relationship with one another is described. While such tasks may not be considered "authentic" in the pure sense of the term, they do elicit the kinds of linguistic structures that students need to internalize during the process of language acquisition (Brown and Yule, 1983). A checklist for assessing the speaker's ability to communicate effectively is set up as in Figure 2. (See Figure 2 at the end of the text.).

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The teacher listens to Speaker A's instructions and marks a check whenever she identifies a component and describes its relationship to another component. The same procedure is followed for Speaker B, C, etc. In the sample checklist in Figure 2, Speaker B was able to communicate all information effectively, whereas Speaker A's performance lacked some important details. In assessing communicative effectiveness, the teacher must be careful to listen to what the *speaker* says and not be influenced by what a listener does or does not do. That is, a listener may figure out a task and complete it without necessarily having explicit instructions from the speaker; conversely, the speaker may describe all of the required information and the listener may not follow the instructions correctly. Figure 2 may also be adapted to assess listening comprehension, in which case the teacher will pay attention to what a *listener* does on the basis of what a speaker says.

Checklists can be useful for classroom assessment because they are easy to construct and use, and they align closely with tasks. At the same time, they are limited in that they do not provide an assessment of the relative quality of a student's performance on a particular task.

Rubrics

In contrast to checklists, rubrics or scales provide an indication of *quality* of performance on a particular task. Rubrics have received much attention in recent years due to the increased emphasis on performance-based assessment. They are primarily used for language tasks that involve some kind of production on the part of the student, be it oral or written. Rubrics are created on the basis of four different scale types—holistic, analytic, primary trait, and multitrait—each of which was developed originally for large scale writing assessment. Scoring rubrics are often used with benchmarks, or samples that act as standards against which other samples are judged (Hart, 1994).

Holistic rubrics. When teachers use holistic scales or rubrics, they are responding to language performance (writing or speaking) as a *whole*. Each score on a holistic scale represents an overall impression; one integrated score is assigned to a performance. A well-known example of a holistic scale is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Proficiency Guidelines* (1986). However, the ACTFL guidelines are not appropriate for classroom use, because they are intended for large-scale assessment of overall proficiency and are not designed necessarily to align with curricular objectives or classroom instruction.

The emphasis in holistic scoring is on what a student does well rather than what he or she has not done well (White, 1985). Holistic rubrics commonly have four or six points. Figure 3 shows a sample four-point holistic scale created for the purposes of assessing writing performance. (See Figure 3 at the end of the text.)

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Holistic scoring is primarily used for large-scale assessment when a relatively quick yet consistent approach to scoring is necessary. It may be less useful for classroom purposes because it provides little information to students about their performance. Nevertheless, well-designed holistic scales provide for efficient scoring and may well be of value in classroom settings in addition to other forms of feedback.

Analytic rubrics. Analytic scales are divided into separate categories representing different aspects or dimensions of performance. Each dimension is scored separately, then dimension scores are added to determine an overall score. Common dimensions for writing performance include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. On a scale having these different categories, an essay would be evaluated by applying a different score to each category. This allows the teacher to weigh certain aspects more heavily than others. For example, content may have a total point range of 30 whereas mechanics may be attributed a total of 10 or 15 points.

One of the best known analytic rubrics used for writing assessment in the field of English as a second language (ESL) was developed by Hughey, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Jacobs (1983). This rubric has five categories—content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Drawing heavily upon characteristics of the Hughey, et al. scale, Tedick and Klee developed an analytic rubric for use in scoring essays written for an immersion quarter for undergraduates studying Spanish (Klee, Tedick, and Cohen 1995). A recently revised version of the rubric appears in Figure 4. (See Figure 4 at the end of the text.)

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Note that the scale in Figure 4 assigns different weights to different features. This allows an instructor to give more emphasis to content than to grammar or mechanics, for example. The option to weigh characteristics on the scale represents an advantage to analytic scoring. The decision to weigh certain criteria or not rests with the task, the purpose, and the level of the students. Figure 5 provides an example of an analytic scale that can be used for assessing speaking. This scale does not emphasize one feature over another, but certainly can be adapted to do so. (See Figure 5 at the end of the text.)

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Analytic rubrics also have the advantage of providing more information to students about the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of their language performance. One of the greatest criticisms of analytic scoring, however, is that the parts do not necessarily add up to the whole, or "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." In other words, providing separate scores for different aspects of a student's writing or speaking performance may be considered artificial in that it does not give the teacher (or student) a good assessment of the "whole" of a performance.

Primary trait rubrics. The primary trait scoring method (Lloyd-Jones, 1977) involves predetermining the main criterion for successful performance on a task. The "primary trait" is defined by the teacher and varies depending upon the task. This approach thus involves narrowing the criteria for judging performance on a task to one main category or dimension. As an example, consider a task that requires that a student write a persuasive letter to an editor of the school newspaper. The primary trait rubric might look something like Figure 6. (See Figure 6 at the end of the text. This kind of rubric has the advantage of allowing teachers (and students) to focus on one aspect or dimension of language performance. It is also a relatively quick and easy way to score writing or speaking performance—especially when a teacher wants to emphasize one specific aspect of that performance.

Multitrait rubrics. A multitrait approach to scoring language performance is similar to the primary trait approach but allows for rating performance on a number of dimensions (usually three or four) rather than emphasizing just one. Although similar to analytic rubrics in that several aspects are scored individually, multitrait rubrics are different in terms of the nature of the dimensions, or traits, that make up the scale. As explained above, an analytic scale comprises more traditional dimensions, such as content, organization, and grammar. A multitrait rubric, in contrast, involves dimensions that are more closely aligned with features of the task used to elicit language performance. For example, on an information-gap speaking task where students are asked to describe a picture in enough detail for a listener to choose it from a set of similar pictures, a multitrait rubric might be created that would include dimensions such as quality of description, fluency, and language control. (See Figure 7 at the end of the text).

In our multitrait example, the maximum total score is 12. Students are assigned a score of 1–4 for each of the three categories, and these are added to create a total score. The alignment of the scale with the task is perhaps the greatest strength of the multitrait rubric; at the same time this very alignment makes a multitrait rubric less transferable for use with other tasks. In other words, it is likely that each time a different task is used, a different rubric (or at least one or two dimensions of that rubric) will have to be developed.

Creating and using rubrics. While some scales or rubrics are created in such a way as to be generic in scope for use with any number of writing or speaking tasks, it is best to consider the task first and make sure that the rubric represents a good fit with the task and your instructional objectives. Just as a variety of task-types should be used in language classrooms, so should a variety of rubrics or scales be used for assessing performance on those tasks. Creating good rubrics that lend themselves well to consistent, accurate assessments takes practice. It is a good idea to begin to collect samples of rubrics that you can refer to and borrow from in the process of developing your own.

Unlike traditional forms of assessment, which often involve more objective methods of scoring and grading, alternative assessments and their accompanying use of rubrics involve subjective judgments. This subjectivity makes it more challenging to establish reliability, or consistency, in scoring and grading. Although a thorough discussion of the notion of reliability as related to the use of rubrics used for performance assessment is beyond the scope of this module, a few pieces of advice can be offered. We recommend that you check your own reliability in some way. For example, as you grade students' written essays using a rubric, keep track of the scores you assign on a separate sheet of paper. A few days later, randomly select a number (e.g., five) of the essays and evaluate them again, being sure not to look at the original scores that you assigned. Then compare the two sets of scores to ensure that you assigned the same or nearly the same scores both times. If the two scores are quite different, you will need to examine the rubric carefully and re-evaluate the essays. This same procedure can be followed for checking your reliability in evaluating students' oral performance, as long as audio or video recordings of the performance are available. Also keep in mind that fatigue can affect an instructor's ability to score students' work consistently. It is a good idea, therefore, to limit the number of written essays or oral performances that you score at one sitting. The more practice you get with the rubrics and the more comfortable you become with the process, the more reliable your scoring will become. For a detailed discussion on reliability in scoring, see, for example, Cohen (1994).

Encouraging reflection through self-assessment and peer assessment

It has been suggested that good language learners are aware of language learning processes (e.g., Carrell, 1989; Devine, 1993; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Schmidt and Frota, 1986). They are aware of and able to reflect on their own and others' language learning strategies and progress as language learners. The ability to distance oneself from a situation and engage in deliberate thought about it defines reflection. While reflection has been recognized as important in all learning, it may be even more critical to language learning, because "the essence of second language education is embodied in its attempt to join individuals together so that they might communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (Tedick, et al., 1993, p. 44). Our views of ourselves and our cultures and of those of others and their cultures are never uniform or static. As Kramsch (1991) explains, " a large part of what we call culture is a social construct, the product of self and other[s'] perceptions." Indeed, language use, or communication, is embedded always within culture, and therefore is largely dependent upon interlocutors' *perceptions* of meaning, which may or may not match the intended meaning. It is this very social, dynamic nature of language and culture that makes second languages different from and more special than other academic disciplines, and, hence, makes reflection so important.

Second language students should be provided with opportunities to engage in systematic reflection on a regular basis. Reflection requires commitment, time, and the will to be open, flexible, and sensitive. People need to begin with situations that they are

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comfortable with and gradually build toward other more risk-taking ventures. Their reflection should be both culturally and linguistically based, as well as focused on self-as-learner and self-as-human-being. Students will not begin to engage in profound reflection on any of these levels overnight; the process needs to occur gradually and carefully, in an atmosphere where the students can ask questions freely (including those directed at a teacher's pedagogy!) and where risk-taking is encouraged (Tedick, 1992). One way to encourage reflection in students is to provide opportunities for them to assess their own language performance and that of others.

Self-assessment

The benefits of having students assess their own progress have been established in research on first-language literacy acquisition in young children (e.g., Brown, 1988; Glazer, 1992; Graves, 1983; Routman, 1991). It is believed that opportunities for self-assessment help students to become independent learners. In addition, a number of second-language studies have found that self-assessment leads to increased motivation in learners (Blanche and Merino, 1989). However, students do not learn to monitor or assess their learning on their own. Students must be taught strategies for self-monitoring and self-assessment. In the case of self-assessments, if time is not taken to instruct students in their use, their validity is questionable. Blanche and Merino (1989), in a review of sixteen studies that employed measures of self-assessment, found that among the factors that can threaten the validity of self-assessment was "the lack of common, valid criteria that both learners and instructors could use to make sound judgments" (p. 325) and learners' lack of training in how to perform the types of self-assessment that had been asked of them. Techniques for teaching students strategies for self-assessment are parallel to those used for teaching learning strategies. Detailed descriptions of such techniques can be found, for example, in O'Malley and Chamot's book on learning strategies (1990) and in Chamot's module on learning strategies in this series.

Self-assessment tools can be used to encourage students' reflection on topics they have studied, vocabulary they have learned, their study habits, and their sense of their overall strengths and weaknesses. Blanche and Merino (1989, pp. 338-340) suggest, for example, that students respond to the following kinds of questions:

1. In the past few lessons (days, weeks), we/I have studied/practiced/worked on: [Students are instructed to fill in a number of blanks with topics and areas (communicative functions, grammatical points, cultural aspects) relevant to their cases.]

2. In your estimation, how well can you deal with the topics you listed under question 1? [Students assess their performance or understanding by using a scale ranging from "not at all" to "thoroughly."]

3. On reflection, to what extent do you find the topics you listed under question 1 important in relation to your own needs? [Students respond by

using a scale ranging from "not important" to "extremely important."]

4. Questions 1-3 are repeated with an emphasis on vocabulary knowledge.
5. Summarizing the past few lessons, we/I feel that we/I have learned: [Students rate their learning on a scale ranging from "nothing at all" to "a lot."]

6. Looking back, I realize that I should change my study habits/learning approach/priorities in the following way:

7. Overall, I think my weaknesses are:

8. Overall, I think my strengths are: [This item was added to Blanche and Merino's list.]

9. In the next few lessons, I am interested in learning about:

Blanche and Merino suggest that students later share their self-assessments with a peer or in a small group, with instructions that they compare their impressions with other criteria such as test scores, teacher evaluations, and peers' opinions. This kind of practice is valuable in that it helps students to be aware of their learning; in addition, it not only informs the teacher about students' thoughts on their learning and progress, but also provides the teacher with feedback about course content and instruction.

Self-assessments can also be used to allow students to evaluate both language processes and products that are specific to the various modalities. Below we describe some techniques for getting at processes related to literacy development and cross-cultural awareness. We also suggest some ideas for involving students in the assessment of their performance.

Processes. Attempting to assess language learning processes represents a rather elusive endeavor. Nevertheless, it is possible to get a sense of students' processes through several self-assessment techniques. Here we describe three techniques: think-alouds, glossing during the writing process, and the use of journals for tapping into processes related to developing cross-cultural understanding.

"Think-alouds" or "verbal reports" can be produced by readers to provide a representation of the processes readers go through as they construct meaning from written text. In order to produce a think-aloud, a learner silently reads a portion of a text in the second language and says out loud (often in the first language) what she is thinking as she tries to construct meaning. She reads more, thinks out loud, and the process continues until the end of the text is reached. Think-alouds help learners and teachers get at *how* a learner goes about making sense of text. According to Glazer and Brown (1993, p. 89), think-alouds are valuable in that they (1) show some of a reader's in-process thinking; (2) encourage thinking about text; (3) help teachers and learners to understand what confuses learners when reading; (4) can inform instructional decisions; and (5) have the potential to reveal to students who are working with peers how others think as they read.

The process approach to writing lends itself well to self-assessment, because students create multiple drafts, receive feedback (from teachers and/or peers), and revise their drafts based on the feedback. [For explanations of the process approach to writing as used in second-language contexts, see for example, Dvorak (1986), Hewins (1986), and Terry (1989).] One easy way to make students aware of their processes as they compose drafts of written text is to have them "gloss" one or two drafts. Glossing when applied to the writing process is similar to glossing unfamiliar vocabulary in a text by providing a definition of the unfamiliar terms in the margin. Glossing takes place after a student receives feedback on a draft. After a student composes a first draft, he or she receives feedback (usually in writing) from an instructor or peer about how to revise the draft to improve it. In the next draft, the student "glosses" his or her revisions by describing in the margins the changes made. A gloss might say, "expanded and developed this part more," or "provided a transition," or "rephrased this sentence." For beginning levels, glossing should occur in the native language. For more advanced learners, glossing might occur in the target language after students are taught the vocabulary and structures needed. Glossing not only helps the learner to focus on specific areas needing improvement, but also helps the instructor or peer reviewer to see exactly how the learner's writing develops from one draft to the next. Such a technique makes it easier for an instructor to assign a grade or award points for the effort that went into the writing process.

Winer and Steffensen (1992) provide a stimulating account of the benefits of peer dialogue journals for promoting cross-cultural awareness among beginning teachers. Language students can also keep personal or dialogue journals with peers to track their processes in gaining cultural understanding. Keeping a journal is important not only because the journal serves as a record, allowing one to see one's growth over time, but also because it involves the medium of writing. Reflection involves thinking, and thoughts change when they are put in writing. Writing provides a different form of reflection than speaking or thinking aloud offers.

Products. In addition to engaging in self-assessment of language and culture learning processes, students can also be asked to assess their own performance on language tasks and their cultural understanding or learning. Below we describe student-teacher contracts, goal setting, and having students rate their own language performance and cultural understanding using rubrics.

One way to begin the process of introducing students to self-assessment is to create student-teacher contracts. Contracts are written agreements between students and instructors, which commonly involve determining the number and type of assignments that are required for particular grades. For example, a student may agree to work toward the grade of "B" by completing a specific number of assignments at a level of quality described by the instructor.

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Contracts can serve as a good way of helping students to begin to consider establishing goals for themselves as language learners.

Goal setting is an important part of self-assessment and learner-centered instruction. It is important for students to consider areas they wish to work on and to assess their progress in achieving a particular goal. Carolyn Tischer, a high school teacher of German in Osseo, Minnesota, has her students develop goals at the beginning of each grading period (personal communication, November, 1993). She learned early on that students have a tendency to create lofty long-range goals, such as "to speak German." In order to help students develop realistic, short-term, attainable goals, Tischer has used a framework which was developed by Lori Adam, a business teacher in the Osseo district, who used the SMART acronym originally created by Conlow (1991). (See Figure 8 at the end of the text.) Goal-setting, in addition to other forms of self-assessment, is also an important part of portfolio assessment, which we describe in more detail below.

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Students can also take part in assessment by evaluating their own performance (and that of their peers) on the basis of checklists and rubrics that are developed. Earlier in this module we described the various types of checklists and rubrics that can be created by language teachers for assessing student performance on communicative, authentic tasks. Students can be taught how to rate their own performance by using such rubrics and checklists. In order to rate their own speaking performance, students would need to audio-tape or video-tape their performance and evaluate it using a rubric or checklist. Writing can easily be evaluated with rubrics.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the need to spend time with students to prepare them for self-assessment activities. Before asking students to rate their own or their peers' performance, you need to be sure that they understand the criteria and how to apply them. The more an instructor models and discusses the process, the more students will benefit from participating in the evaluation of their work.

In addition to participating in the assessment of their language performance, students need to be involved in assessing their cultural understanding and knowledge. If we consider that a major purpose of language education is to provide students with the knowledge and abilities to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Tedick, et al., 1993), we recognize the central role that culture needs to play in language education. Kramsch (1993) emphasizes that if we view language as social practice, we must see culture as the core of language instruction. It follows that if we agree that culture needs to be at the core of language instruction, we must also devise ways of assessing students' cultural knowledge and understanding. Wiggins (1989) and others have argued quite convincingly that if we value

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something, we must assess it, for to neglect a concept in assessment is to communicate to students that the concept isn't important.

Kramsch (1993) has suggested that students need to learn about the multiplicity of perspectives that define cultural constructs. She argues that instead of having students simply state their interpretation of a cultural construct, they should be engaged in tasks that require them to *reflect an understanding* of a construct. For example, students have been learning about the educational system in Germany. Their task is to create a videotape about the U.S. educational system for a group of German students who will be on an exchange in the United States the following year. They are instructed to create a description of the U.S. system that reflects their understanding of what they have learned about the German system. In this way, teachers are able to tap into deeper levels of cross-cultural understanding.

We offer an example here of a performance task created for college-level students of French that includes a reflection of students' understanding of the French concept of "home." The task and assessments described below are intended to be interpreted as both teacher and student assessments. In other words, the tasks are designed in such a way as to allow for teacher assessment and students' self-assessment. This description incorporates many of the techniques and ideas we have discussed up to this point.

Suzanne Cook, a French instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy, created this assessment for a course at the University of Minnesota (Cook, 1994). The performance task of this summative assessment is integrative in that it combines reading comprehension, writing, and cultural understanding. Before reading a text in French, students are instructed to reflect on their background knowledge of "the French and their homes" by responding to the following questions in English. They are assured that there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Describe the image you have of a French home. What is the image based on (TV, magazines, textbooks, visit to France—where in France, etc.)? In other words, reflect on what you believe has led you to form this image.

2. Would you characterize the French as hospitable to visitors in their home or not? Support your answer.

3. How would you describe Americans in terms of their hospitality? Feel free to use your own experience here: how does your family deal with guests in your home?

By beginning the assessment in this way, Cook communicates to students the value of using pre-reading strategies such as activating prior knowledge. She also gathers critical information that may help her understand a student's performance on the assessment. Next, students are instructed to read an excerpt from the book *Evidences Invisibles* (Carroll, 1987).

They are prompted with the following:

> The following excerpt comes from the book *Evidences Invisibles*, by Raymonde Carroll, a French anthropologist who is married to an American anthropologist and who has lived in the U.S. for some 20 years. She studied the common misunderstandings between French and American people, misunderstandings which are usually due to different assumptions about how one should live and which are not explicitly considered when individuals are interacting. The following passage reveals some of the fundamental assumptions which, according to Carroll, the French generally have about the home. Read the text carefully for understanding and with an eye for differences from your own concept of "home."

For assessing basic comprehension, Cook asks students to respond in English to some literal-level questions about the text. She also asks that they reflect in writing "on the author of this text and the implication this might have for the information she presents, in particular on how representative it might be of the whole population of France." By asking students to consider this inferential question, Cook attempts to tap students' understanding that the author's interpretation is directly related to her individual view of the world, based on her status and educational level, and that the information presented may not represent all French people. She assesses students' responses to this question with a checklist. (See Figure 9 at the end of the text.)

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The basic comprehension questions and critical thinking/inferential question are followed by this performance task:

> Imagine you just received the following post card from a friend who recently arrived in Lyon to spend the summer with a French family. This friend is having some difficulty understanding the ways of his/her host family. With what you've learned from the reading passage, write a response to your friend in French to help him/her adjust. What should s/he do differently? Include information from the text (at least 3 main ideas), in your own words, and relate it to your friend's knowledge of the way Americans do things.

The postcard text is presented to the students in French, but its English translation is provided in Figure 10. (See Figure 10 at the end of the text.

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The writing assignment represents an integrative task, where students are asked to link prior knowledge (of American homes and how Americans treat visitors in their homes) to new knowledge gained from the reading passage. A multitrait rubric having three categories (see Figure 11 at the end of the text) is used to assess the students' writing performance. Total scores may range from 3 to 12.

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Peer assessment

One of the ways in which students internalize the characteristics of quality work is by evaluating the work of their peers. However, if they are to offer helpful feedback, students must have a clear understanding of what they are to look for in their peers' work. For example, when they read a peer's essay or listen to a presentation, should they focus only on grammatical accuracy? content? organization? or something else? The instructor must explain expectations clearly to them before they begin. If students are asked to give one another feedback on their essays, one way to make sure they understand what they are to evaluate is to provide students with a sample composition on an overhead and, as a group, determine what should be assessed (i.e., how does one define good writing), carry out the assessment, and then determine how to convey clearly to the fictitious student how he or she could improve the essay.

Students also benefit from the use of rubrics or checklists to guide their assessments; these rubrics can be provided by the instructor, or once the students have more experience, they can develop them themselves. Figure 12 (at the end of the text) is an example of a Peer Editing Checklist, which was developed by Susana Blanco-Iglesias, Joaquina Broner, Marisa Geisler, and Begoña Miguel-Pérez, and is used in second-year Spanish classes at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Notice that the checklist requires that the peer evaluator comment primarily on the content and organization of the essay and helps the evaluator focus on aspects of good organization, e.g., "Are there concrete examples to support each of the ideas discussed?"

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Before we introduced the Peer Editing Checklist, students complained that they did not receive feedback that was helpful from their peers and considered peer editing to be a waste of time. Now students write a first draft of their essay at home and turn it in the next day to a group of three peers. The peers then read the essay at home and fill out the checklist and return it to the student in the next class. The instructor provides fifteen to twenty minutes of class time for the peer editing groups to meet and discuss their suggestions for each other's essays. Each student returns home with three peer reviews of his or her essay and then writes a second draft which is turned in to the instructor. The instructor provides feedback on content, organization, and grammatical accuracy. The student then writes the third and final draft but is evaluated on the entire process, including his/her evaluations of peers' essays. We believe that it is important to include peer evaluation in a student's final grade to insure that they take the task seriously.

In addition to peer assessment of writing, students can also evaluate their peers' oral presentations, role plays, skits, or debates. Again, it is important that students receive guidance on *what* to evaluate. The use of rubrics or checklists, as described earlier, helps students focus on the aspects that they should assess.

One final caveat: For peer evaluation to work effectively, the learning environment in the classroom must be supportive. Students must feel comfortable and trust one another to provide honest and constructive feedback. If you use process writing in your class and frequently use peer assessment, we recommend that you form groups of three to four students early in the semester and allow students to work within the same groups throughout the term. This will allow them to become more comfortable with each other and may lead to better feedback from peers.

Portfolio assessment

Definitions and characteristics of portfolios

Portfolios are purposeful, organized, systematic collections of student work that tell the story of a student's efforts, progress, and achievement in specific areas. This collection must include student participation in the selection of portfolio content, the guidelines for selection, and the criteria for judging merit (Hart, 1994; Tierney, et al., 1991). Portfolio assessment encompasses all that we have discussed thus far: an emphasis on a variety of tasks that elicit spontaneous as well as planned language performance for a variety of purposes and audiences, the use of rubrics to assess performance, and a strong emphasis on self-reflection and assessment (including goal setting), and peer assessment. Portfolio assessment lends itself well to meeting a variety of pedagogical objectives that are important to second language acquisition. Entire books have been written about portfolio assessment; it is an approach that requires a great deal of planning and collaboration. Here we offer a brief description of portfolio assessment, but we encourage readers to refer to the articles and books in our reference list for more detailed information before attempting this approach to assessment.

The following list of characteristics and functions of portfolios is adapted from a variety of sources, including: Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp. (1993); Glazer and Brown (1993); Hart (1994); Hasty-Bambenek, Nielsen, and Tedick (1995); Tierney, et al. (1991). Portfolios:

- represent an emphasis on language use and cultural understanding;

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- represent a collaborative approach to assessment;
- represent a student's range of performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening as well as cultural understanding;
- emphasize what students can do rather than what they cannot do;
- represent a student's progress over time;
- engage students in establishing ongoing learning goals and assessing their progress towards those goals;
- measure each student's achievement while allowing for individual differences between students in a class;
- address improvement, effort, and achievement;
- allow for assessment of process and product; and
- link teaching and assessment to learning.

Fundamental to portfolio assessment is an emphasis on assessing students' progress, processes, and performance over time. It is important to distinguish between two basic types of portfolios. The first type may be referred to as an ongoing classroom or *process* portfolio and the second as a final *product* portfolio. Their distinction lies in the purpose that each serves. An ongoing classroom or *process* portfolio serves the purpose of classroom-level assessment on the part of both the instructor and the student. It is more reflective of *formative* assessment, although it may be assigned a grade at the end of a period of time, be it a semester or academic year. It may also include summative types of assignments that were awarded grades. In contrast, a final *product* portfolio, being more *summative* in nature, is intended for a major evaluation of some sort and is often accompanied by an oral presentation of the portfolio. For example, it may be used as a evaluation tool for graduation from a program or for the purpose of seeking employment.

To highlight the differences between these two types of portfolios, we offer the following examples. Rochelle Nielsen and Timothy Hasty-Bambenek teach high school Spanish and have their students keep ongoing portfolios during every academic year, which they carry with them to subsequent levels (Hasty-Bambenek, et al., 1995). At the beginning of the academic year, the portfolio assessment process is described to first year students at length, and they are asked to select three-ring binders (with pockets) for developing their portfolios. Students establish language/culture learning goals for the year and are asked to reflect on how the portfolio might help them achieve those goals. The portfolios are divided into a variety of sections that allow students to organize their assignments and reflections on those assignments. Students collect pieces or projects required by the teacher as well as work of their own choosing.

Hasty-Bambenek and Nielsen believe that the portfolios should be accompanied by individual conferences with students at various points throughout the academic year. These conferences allow students to discuss their goals, work, and progress toward the goals during the year. At the end of the year, students include a description of their final review process, which involves selection of significant pieces and reflections about why they believe they were successful (or not successful) with a particular piece. Nielsen (personal communication, March, 1996) explains that such reflection helps students to focus on the relationship between effort and achievement. This emphasis on reflection is key, as it renders the portfolio more than a collection of work over time.

A good example of a final product portfolio is provided by Jeannette Bragger (1994), who developed with colleagues a series of procedures for assessing student outcomes in the French major at The Pennsylvania State University. In this context, the major portfolio is intended to represent a synthesis of students' learning during their studies in French. Students document both their progress in the use of French and their knowledge of Francophone literatures and cultures as well as their progress in analytical and critical thinking skills, problem-solving and synthesizing abilities, and research skills. After the student submits the final portfolio to his/her advisor, a meeting is scheduled for the student to present the portfolio orally to his/her three-member committee. The committee then judges the portfolio with a grade of "pass" or "pass with distinction."

At the postsecondary level, portfolios are most useful to students and instructors when they reflect extended periods of time, such as an entire academic year or two or more academic years. This suggests the need for a departmental commitment to this alternative form of assessment. Such commitment is apparent in Bragger's (1994) description of the major portfolio at Penn State and Fraser's (1995) description of Indiana University's approach to portfolio assessment in German.

Representing student progress on all modalities

Portfolios have the potential to represent student performance and progress on all language modalities. They can also be used, however, to reflect students' work on just one modality. They are most commonly linked with the writing process and have been used with great success in representing students' growth over time with literacy skills in elementary settings (e.g., Glazer and Brown, 1993).

Assessing portfolios

There are a variety of ways to assess portfolios, and the process can involve teacher assessment, students' personal assessment, collaborative assessment between the teacher and the student, peer assessment, or a combination thereof. Educators conducting a pilot project of portfolio assessment in foreign language classrooms in Indiana (Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp., 1993) offer a variety of excellent guidelines for making decisions about the assessment process.

The evaluative process should include ongoing (formative) assessments of students' work as well as overall (summative) assessments. This overall assessment should require the students to select representative samples of their work attached to explanations as to how these selections best represent their progress. Students may also be asked to respond to questions that aren't necessarily tied to specific pieces in the portfolio, but instead reflect a general overall understanding. For example, they may be asked to explain what they have learned about the target culture during a particular time frame or to describe their own

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contribution to their learning of the target language (Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp., 1993).

Determining how to go about assessing portfolios in a systematic way is a process that involves reflection, much discussion and negotiation with students and colleagues, and risk-taking. The more the collaboration, the better the process, and, most certainly, the outcome.

Concluding Thoughts: Advice to New Instructors

First and foremost, we would like to emphasize once again that assessment must be congruent with both the content and goals of the curriculum and the processes of instruction. If you want to use alternative assessment effectively, your classroom should be communicative and learner centered.

Assuming that this is the case, one of the major challenges in the implementation of alternative assessment is time constraints. Particularly in large institutions with standardized exams, instructors feel that they must cover the material that will appear on the exams and do not have time to teach learners how to learn, how to use strategies, and how to assess themselves and their peers. If you are in this situation, we suggest that you speak with your course supervisor to determine if the amount of material covered can be reduced to allow sufficient time for attention to the learning process. However, if it is not possible to change the amount of material covered in the curriculum, you can still introduce some forms of alternative assessment in your classroom, especially if you develop ways of integrating them into the existing sequences of practice activities. (In this module see, for example, the writing assignments described on pp. 5-6, the oral activities on pp. 6-7, or the integrative reading and writing lesson on pp. 22-25.)

Finally, no matter how much flexibility you have in introducing alternative assessments, it is absolutely essential that you take the time to teach students how to use them. Introduce alternative assessment gradually and always in conjunction with more traditional forms of assessment. Students may not be accustomed to taking on responsibility for assessment and will need to adjust to this new role. As you become familiar with the process of creating authentic performance tasks for assessing language performance and of developing and using checklists and rubrics, and as your students grow accustomed to and find they benefit from evaluating themselves and their peers, you can expand the amount of alternative assessment used in your classroom.

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Suggested Additional Reading

Alternative Assessment. (1995). Special issue of the *TESOL Journal,* 5(1).

This entire issue of *TESOL Journal* is devoted to the theme of alternative assessment and contains very practical articles about using portfolios, self-assessment techniques, and other innovative assessment practices in a variety of second language contexts. Although directed to English as a second language teachers, the issue should prove to be of interest to foreign language instructors as well.

Belanoff, P. and M. Dickson. (Eds.). (1991). *Portfolios: Process and Product*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., Heinemann.

This edited volume contains chapters by well-known scholars in the field of first language writing. It is divided into four sections: portfolios for proficiency testing, program assessment, classroom portfolios, and political issues. The chapters offer both theoretical insights and ideas for practical application.

Brindley, G. (1989). *Assessing Achievement in the Learner-Centred Curriculum*. Sydney, Australia: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.

This book provides a detailed synopsis of a study commissioned by the Adult Migrant Education Program in Australia for examining ways of assessing the achievement of adult learners of English as a second language. The report summarizes the results of the study and provides in-depth descriptions of assessment procedures and rating scales that emphasize criterion-referenced methods.

Hancock, C. R. (Ed.). (1994). *Teaching, Testing, and Assessing: Making the Connection*. Northeast Conference Reports. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.

This volume of the Northeast Conference Reports examines the relationship between teaching, testing, and assessment in the foreign language classroom. It includes chapters that focus on the assessment of specific language modalities (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) as well as those that take into account affective considerations and the assessment of culture through portfolios. The chapter by Wiggins provides an excellent rationale for the use of alternative assessments in foreign language teaching.

Gill, K. (Ed.). (1993). *Process and Portfolios in Writing Instruction*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

In this collection of articles, English language arts teachers representing elementary, secondary, and college settings, offer ideas for implementing a process approach to the teaching of writing in conjunction with the use of portfolios for assessment. The contributors emphasize the value of student collaboration and student responsibility in the process of learning to become effective writers.

Smith, M. A. and M. Ylvisaker. (Eds.). (1993). *Teachers' Voices: Portfolios in the Classroom*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.

In this collection, thirteen classroom teachers discuss the difficulties and benefits of using portfolios for writing assessment.

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Figure 1 Checklist for Oral Presentation of Interview

Criteria	Yes	No
Describes interviewee (gender, age, place of birth, occupation).		
Explain's interviewee's immigration to Minnesota.		
Describes at least one challenge the interviewee faces.		
Describes how interviewee maintains connection to culture.		
Describes point of interest.		
Speaks for a minimum of 3 minutes.		
Evidence of rehearsal (not reading to class).		

Figure 2 Checklist for Information-Gap Exercise

Required Information	Speaker			
	A	B	C	D....
component 1	√	√		
component 2	√	√		
relationship between 2 and 1		√		
component 3	√	√		
relationship between 3 and 2/1		√		
component 4	√	√		
relationship between 4 and 3/2/1	√	√		
component 5	√	√		
relationship between 5 and the rest		√		

Adapted from Brown and Yule (1983). Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

Figure 3 Holistic Scale for Assessing Writing

4	**Excellent**—Communicative; reflects awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; well-organized and coherent; contains a range of grammatical structures with minor errors that do not impede comprehension; good vocabulary range.
3	**Good**—Comprehensible; some awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; adequate organization and coherence; adequate use of grammatical structures with some major errors that do not impede comprehension; limited vocabulary range.
2	**Fair**—Somewhat comprehensible; little awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; some problems with organization and coherence; reflects basic use of grammatical structures with very limited range and major errors that at times impede comprehension; basic vocabulary used.
1	**Poor**—Barely comprehensible; no awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; lacks organization and coherence; basic use of grammatical structures with many minor and major errors that often impede comprehension; basic to poor vocabulary range.

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113

Figure 4 Analytic Writing Scale for the Spanish FLIP Program

Content — 30 Total points possible

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	30 - 27	**Excellent to Very Good**— ○ addresses all aspects of the prompt ○ provides good support for and development of all ideas with range of detail ○ substantive	
	26 - 22	**Good to Average**— ○ prompt adequately addressed ○ ideas not fully developed or supported with detail, though main ideas are clear ○ less substance	
	21 - 17	**Fair**— ○ prompt may not be fully addressed (writer may appear to skirt aspects of prompt) ○ ideas not supported well, main ideas lack detailed development ○ little substance	
	16 - 13	**Poor**— ○ doesn't adequately address prompt ○ little to no support or development of ideas ○ non-substantive	

Organization — 20 Total points possible

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	20 - 18	**Excellent to Very Good**— ○ well-framed and organized (with clear introduction, conclusion) ○ coherent ○ succinct ○ cohesive (excellent use of connective words)	
	17 - 14	**Good to Average**— ○ adequate but loose organization with introduction and conclusion (though they may be limited or one of the two may be missing) ○ somewhat coherent ○ more wordy rather than succinct ○ somewhat cohesive (good use of connective words)	
	13 - 10	**Fair**— ○ lacks good organization (no evidence of introduction, conclusion) ○ ideas may be disconnected, confused ○ lacks coherence ○ wordy and repetitive ○ lacks consistent use of cohesive elements	
	9 - 7	**Poor**— ○ confusing, disconnected organization ○ lacks coherence, so much so that writing is difficult to follow ○ lacks cohesion	

Figure 4 continued on next page

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Figure 4 Analytic Writing Scale (cont.)

Language Use/Grammar/Morphology — 25 Total points possible

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	25 - 22	**Excellent to Very Good**— ○ great variety of grammatical forms (e.g., range of indicative verb forms; use of subjunctive) ○ complex sentence structure (e.g., compound sentences, embedded clauses) ○ evidence of "Spanish-like" construction ○ mastery of agreement (subj/verb; number/gender) ○ very few errors (if any) overall with none that obscure meaning	
	21 - 18	**Good to Average**— ○ some variety of grammatical forms (e.g., attempts, though not always accurate, at range of verb forms, use of subjunctive) ○ attempts, though not always accurate, at complex sentence structure (e.g., compound sentences, embedded clauses) ○ little evidence of "Spanish-like" construction, though without clear translations from English ○ occasional errors with agreement ○ some errors (minor) that don't obscure meaning	
	17 - 11	**Fair**— ○ less variety of grammatical forms (e.g., little range of verb forms; inaccurate, if any, attempts at subjunctive) ○ simplistic sentence structure ○ evidence of "English-like" construction (e.g., some direct translation of phrases) ○ consistent errors (e.g., with agreement), but few of which may obscure meaning	
	10 - 5	**Poor**— ○ very little variety of grammatical forms ○ simplistic sentence structure that contains consistent errors, especially with basic aspects such as agreement ○ evidence of translation from English ○ frequent and consistent errors that may obscure meaning	

Figure 4 continued on next page

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Figure 4 Analytic Writing Scale (cont.)

Vocabulary/Word Usage — 20 Total points possible

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	20 - 18	**Excellent to Very Good—** ○ sophisticated, academic range ○ extensive variety of words ○ effective and appropriate word/idiom choice and usage ○ appropriate register	
	17 - 14	**Good to Average—** ○ good, but not extensive (less academic) range or variety ○ occasional errors of word/idiom choice or usage (some evidence of invention of "false" cognates), but very few or none that obscure meaning ○ appropriate register	
	13 - 10	**Fair—** ○ limited and "non-academic" range (frequent repetition of words) ○ more consistent errors with word/idiom choice or usage (frequent evidence of translation; invention of "false" cognates) that may (though seldom) obscure meaning ○ some evidence of inappropriate register	
	9 - 7	**Poor—** ○ very limited range of words ○ consistent and frequent errors with word/idiom choice or usage (ample evidence of translation) ○ meaning frequently obscured ○ evidence of inappropriate register	

Mechanics — 5 Total points possible

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	5	**Excellent to Very Good—** ○ demonstrates mastery of conventions ○ few errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents	
	4	**Good to Average—** ○ occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents, but meaning is not obscured	
	3	**Fair—** ○ frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents that at times confuses or obscures meaning	
	2	**Poor—** ○ no mastery of conventions ○ dominated by errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents	

Total Score: Comments:

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Figure 5 Analytic Scale for Assessing Speaking

Pronunciation	
4	**Excellent**—No consistent or conspicuous mispronunciation; approaches native-like pronunciation with good intonation and juncture.
3	**Good**—Some identifiable deviations in pronunciation, but with no phonemic errors. Non-native accent evident with occasional mispronunciations that do not interfere with understanding.
2	**Fair**—Identifiable deviations in pronunciation with some phonemic errors. Non-native accent requires careful listening, and mispronunciations lead to occasional misunderstanding.
1	**Poor**—Frequent pronunciation errors with a heavy non-native accent. Many phonemic errors that make understanding difficult.
Fluency	
4	**Excellent**—Speech is effortless and smooth with speed that approaches that of a native speaker.
3	**Good**—Speech is mostly smooth but with some hesitation and unevenness caused primarily by rephrasing and groping for words.
2	**Fair**—Speech is slow and often hesitant and jerky. Sentences may be left uncompleted, but speaker is able to continue, however haltingly.
1	**Poor**—Speech is very slow and exceedingly halting, strained, and stumbling except for short or memorized expressions. Difficult for a listener to perceive continuity in utterances and speaker may not be able to continue.
Grammar/Language Use	
4	**Excellent**—Very strong command of grammatical structure and some evidence of difficult, complex patterns and idioms. Makes infrequent errors that do not impede comprehension.
3	**Good**—Good command of grammatical structures but with imperfect control of some patterns. Less evidence of complex patterns and idioms. Limited number of errors that are not serious and do not impede comprehension.
2	**Fair**—Fair control of most basic syntactic patterns. Speaker always conveys meaning in simple sentences. Some important grammatical patterns are uncontrolled and errors may occasionally impede comprehension.
1	**Poor**—Any accuracy is limited to set or memorized expressions; limited control of even basic syntactic patterns. Frequent errors impede comprehension.

Figure 5 continued on next page

Figure 5 Analytic Scale for Assessing Speaking (cont.)

Vocabulary	
4	**Excellent**—Very good range of vocabulary with evidence of sophistication and native-like expression. Strong command of idiomatic expressions. Infrequent use of circumlocution because particular words are rarely lacking.
3	**Good**—Good range of vocabulary with limited evidence of sophistication. Some expressions distinctly non-native but always comprehensible. Limited evidence of idiomatic expressions. Speaker is comfortable with circumlocution when lacking a particular word.
2	**Fair**—Adequate range of vocabulary with no evidence of sophistication. Some distinctly non-native expressions or errors in word choice may impede comprehension. No evidence of idiomatic expressions. Speaker has difficulty with circumlocution when lacking a particular word.
1	**Poor**—Limited range of vocabulary. Lack of repertoire and frequent errors in word choice often impede comprehension. Speaker shows no attempt at circumlocution when lacking a particular word.

Total Score:

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Figure 6 Primary Trait Rubric

Primary Trait: Persuading an audience

0 — Fails to persuade the audience.

1 — Attempts to persuade but does not provide sufficient support.

2 — Presents a somewhat persuasive argument but without consistent development and support.

3 — Develops a persuasive argument that is well developed and supported.

Figure 7 Multitrait Rubric

	Quality of Description	Fluency	Language Control
4	High level of accuracy in description is reflected; high degree of detail included in description.	Smooth and fluid speech; few to no hesitations; no attempts to grope for words.	Excellent control of language features; a wide range of well chosen vocabulary; accuracy and variety of grammatical structures.
3	Good accuracy in description, though some detail might be lacking.	Speech is relatively smooth but is characterized by some hesitation and unevenness caused by rephrasing and/or groping for words.	Good language control; good range of relatively well chosen vocabulary; some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempt to include a variety.
2	Description lacks some accuracy and some critical details are missing that make it difficult for the listener to complete the task.	Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky, with some sentences left uncompleted.	Adequate language control; vocabulary range is lacking; frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures.
1	Description is so lacking that the listener cannot complete the task.	Speech is slow and exceedingly hesitant and strained except for short or memorized phrases; difficult to perceive continuity in utterances.	Weak language control; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking; frequent grammatical errors, even in simple structures, that at times obscure meaning.

Total Score:

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Figure 8 Setting SMART Goals

GOAL(S)	State your goal(s) below. Examine your goal(s).
Specific	Is it focused? Explain.
Measurable	Can you tell if it is accomplished? Explain.
Attainable	Is it a realistic target, given the time frame? Explain.
Relevant	Is it a priority? Explain.
Trackable	Can the results be compared over time? Explain.
OUTCOME	Describe whether and how you achieved your goal(s).

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Figure 9 Assessing Responses to an Inferential Question

Situates author as educated and/or (at least) middle class.	Yes ___ No ___
Demonstrates an understanding that information might not/does not represent all French people, or more generally that social variables affect the way people behave.	Yes ___ No ___

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Figure 10 Information Input for a Writing Task

Dear __________,

I just arrived at the Fourniers' house, and I seem to have begun my stay with them on the wrong foot! The family prepared a dinner to celebrate my arrival and invited some friends. I decided to help Mrs. Fournier in the kitchen, but she insisted that I leave and stay out of the kitchen. Later, I greeted some guests at the door with Mr. Fournier and was happy to help by taking the woman's coat and putting it on the bed in Mr. and Mrs. Fournier's room. But when I came out of the room, Mrs. Fournier had a surprised look on her face and didn't seem very pleased. Later on, so as not to bother Mr. or Mrs. Fournier, I went into the kitchen and grabbed a beer out of the fridge. When I returned to the living room, Mr. and Mrs. Fournier seemed completely shocked. I truly cannot understand what I did to make them so angry.

Tell me what you think. Please write soon!

Michael/Michelle

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Figure 11 Assessing Performance on a Writing Task

	Content	Cultural Sensitivity	Language Control
4	Writing reflects thorough comprehension of the reading passage; effectively addresses the topic (is convincing to a reader); mentions at least 3 main ideas from the reading passage as support; demonstrates integration of new and prior knowledge.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture avoid making a judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse.	Excellent control of language features; a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary and appropriate register; accuracy and variety of grammatical structures; uses own words to convey ideas from the reading passage.
3	Writing reflects good comprehension of the reading passage; adequately addresses the topic; mentions at least two main ideas from the reading passage as support; demonstrates attempts at integration of new and prior knowledge.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture generally avoid making judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse, though some language used might suggest judgment. Less, rather than more, judgmental.	Good language control; good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary; appropriate register; some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempt to include a variety; clear attempts to use own words to convey ideas from the reading passage.
2	Writing reflects some comprehension of the reading passage; fairly addresses the topic, though may miss some critical points; mentions at least one main idea from the reading passage as support; demonstrates attempts at integration of new and prior knowledge, but writing might reflect some misunderstanding	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture at times seem to reflect judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse. More, rather than less, judgmental.	Adequate language control; vocabulary range is lacking; register may/may not be consistently appropriate. Frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures. Doesn't always attempt to use own words to convey ideas from reading passage (has "lifted" portions).
1	Writing does not consistently reflect comprehension of the reading passage; topic is not adequately addressed and critical points are missing; little to no support from reading passage; writing reflects some misunderstanding.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture often reflect judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse. Very judgmental.	Weak language control; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking; frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures that at times obscure meaning. Inconsistent use of register. Consistently "lifts" large portions of reading passage rather than attempting to use own words.

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Figure 12 Peer Editing Checklist

Department of Spanish and Portuguese
University of Minnesota

PEER EDITING CHECKLIST

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION
Composition/Draft #___

Editor ______________________________ Student's name ______________________________

I. What is the **main point** of the composition?

Is it clearly stated in the introduction?

Are there irrelevant, redundant, ambiguous, or otherwise unclear ideas present?
Where?

Are there concrete examples to support each of the ideas discussed? Where are more examples needed?

What changes need to be made in order to clarify and/or develop the main point better?

II. Are all three of the "Basic Components of a Composition" (introduction, support conclusion) present?

Which of these parts need(s) further development and in what way?

III Is there a title?

Are the paragraphs logically related and sequenced? If not, where?

Is there adequate use of *connectors* between sentences and also paragraphs?

Is each idea/sub-topic organized into a different paragraph?

IV. Are there passages in which spelling and/or grammar hinder the meaning? Where?

GENERAL COMMENTS:

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Grammar in the Foreign Language Classroom
Making Principled Choices

Patricia Byrd
Georgia State University

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations for Pedagogical Grammar 3
  "Grammar" 3
  "Teaching grammar" 3
  "Pedagogical grammar" 4
  Communicative competence 6
  Implications of task-based instruction for foreign language teachers 7
  Errors and error correction in foreign language instruction 9
  Understanding our students: the power provided for teachers from teaching strategies based on learning styles 11

Practical Applications 13
  Examples and exemplification in the foreign language classroom 13
  Analyzing the resources provided in a required textbook 13
  Supplementing a textbook with additional grammar activities 16
  Pulling it all together: what do I do in class on Monday? 17

Conclusion 19

References 20

Suggested Additional Reading 23

Figures 1-2 24-25
Tables 1-6 26-31
Figure 3 32
Table 7 33

Introduction

New foreign language teachers often go to one extreme or another in their work with grammar: One extreme is to ignore linguistic issues altogether and to focus either on literature or on a random collection of communication activities; the other extreme is to fall back on memories of their own language learning experiences, focusing class activities on grammar drills and descriptions of rules. In the first instance, the new teacher is ignoring one of the basic responsibilities of the foreign language teacher—to provide for the linguistic development of students. In the second instance, the teacher turns the foreign language class into a lecture course on linguistic theory and on grammatical information about the language being studied, carrying into language classes the content and methods from graduate courses on the structure of French, Spanish, German, Chinese, or whatever the teacher is studying. In both instances, new teachers are unaware of gains that have been made in putting grammar teaching and learning within the context of communicative competence and of the development of linguistic proficiency. Once a teacher has a conceptual basis for making decisions about "teaching grammar," then decisions about classroom activities can be made in a principled manner. Thus, this module focuses primarily on ideas that lie behind decisions about the presentation, practice, and use of particular grammar materials in foreign language classrooms.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations for Pedagogical Grammar

As teachers of introductory courses in foreign languages, we seldom have much control over the selection of textbooks and materials that are assigned for our classes. Thus, we have little control over the grammar topics selected for presentation or over the organization and sequencing of the grammatical material that our students will be required to study. Our creativity as teachers in such situations depends on our having a clear understanding of the grammar of the language we are teaching and a similarly clear understanding of strategies we can use in presenting, explaining, practicing, and using the language featured in our textbooks and course materials. Teaching can be both more interesting and more effective when we combine knowledge about grammar with knowledge about communicative competence, about learning styles and strategies, and about the range of choices that teachers have for language-learning activities. First, however, we must be clear about what we mean when we talk about "grammar" and the "teaching of grammar."

"Grammar"

Grammar is a word of multiple meanings. As a result, discussions about the "teaching of grammar" often lead to miscommunication because the participants are talking about different things while using the same terminology. Grammar can refer to the structure of a language, to particular approaches to the study of linguistics and language(s) (transformational-generative grammar, case grammar, universal grammar, pedagogical grammar, and so forth), to usage ("he ain't got no grammar"), and to books or materials on a particular language ("a grammar of Farsi"). As Odlin (1994) points out, grammar can be developed as prescriptive rules that point out socially approved usage, as descriptive statements to give detailed information about a language, as explanations for an internalized aspect of the human brain, and as "generative" systems that seek to describe language in formal systems influenced by symbolic logic. Thus, the nature of grammar depends to a great extent upon the purpose of the scholar and the teacher and upon the academic tradition to which s/he belongs.

"Teaching grammar"

Teaching grammar is another phrase that can lead to miscommunication. At one extreme the phrase is taken to mean "teacher-fronted-lectures-about-details-of-the-structure-of-the-language." Certainly, many of us have suffered through that interpretation of the language teacher's role. Unfortunately, even those of us who recognize that such lectures lead to knowledge about the language rather than skill at using it can fall into the trap of giving lectures in our own class—such is the power of tradition. However, teaching grammar does not have to mean lecturing about structural abstractions. In this module, teaching grammar refers to the decisions made and actions taken by the language teacher to help students become both fluent and accurate in their use of their new language. These actions can be overt presentations of grammatical information when it can profitably be used by students, but they can also be the "behind-the-scenes" decisions made by teachers in the selection of materials and classroom activities.

Research in second language acquisition (see, for example, Rutherford, 1987 and Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988) has shown that many adult students benefit from overt attention to grammar through a process termed "consciousness raising" that helps the learner be aware of the features of the language as a guide to further learning. At the same time, it has been found (Spada, 1987) that explicit grammatical instruction is not the only factor that contributes to increased proficiency in a language. Thus, appropriate attention to grammar is still a major task of the foreign language teacher. Deciding on what makes for "appropriate attention" is one of the major issues in language teaching today. Answers will need to include decisions about what grammar is, about how students approach the language learning task, and about the materials that the teacher uses both for in-class activities and for out-of-class study.

"Pedagogical grammar"

Perhaps more to the point for language teachers are discussions about the meaning of the term "pedagogical grammar." Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1988: p. 119) ask the following question about definitions for the term pedagogical grammar:

> It is therefore appropriate to ask what it is that we denote by the widely used citation pedagogical grammar (PG) because the term appears to occur with less than semantic consistency. Is PG, for example, a discipline, a formal abstraction, or a collection of facts about a particular language? If it is the latter, are such facts intended for digestion by curriculum designers, syllabus compilers, teachers, or learners? Or is PG all of these things? Is it possibly more than these?

For language teachers, the answer has to be some combination of the following (Byrd, 1994): knowledge about:

1. the structures and linguistic systems of a particular language;
2. second language acquisition (the results of research focused on learning to use the linguistic resources of a language);
3. foreign language pedagogy (the range of choices available for teachers to use in presenting, practicing, and using a new language with learners);
4. the learning styles and strategies used by different groups of students (at different ages with different purposes for their study of the foreign language); and
5. effective use of materials for the delivery of linguistic information and the development of proficiency.

Thus, pedagogical grammar combines knowledge about the structure of the language with knowledge and skill at helping foreign language learners working in classroom settings to become proficient users of the language. (See Figure 1 at the end of the text.)

Larsen-Freeman (1991) recommends the visualization of grammar in terms of a pie chart divided into equal segments labeled form, meaning, and pragmatics (see Figure 1). The arrows indicate that you can start in any segment and flow to an adjacent segment. For example, English past tense verbs can be analyzed in terms of forms, the meanings of those forms, and the contexts in which those forms are used for those meanings. Form issues include pronunciation and spelling of the regular past tense verb form (spelled *-ed* and pronounced in one of three ways depending on the nature of the preceding sound). Other form issues include the spelling and pronunciation of the irregular verb forms. In the Larsen-Freeman formulation, meaning focuses on relatively more abstract statements. For the English past tense, meaning could include "events completed in the past" and "unreal, hypothetical meanings"—as in *I walked to class this morning* for past time reference and *If I walked to class, I would lose some weight* for the unreal, hypothetical meaning. Pragmatics is the study of the contexts in which forms are used. We use English past tense forms for past time meanings in a number of different past time narrative genres, including biography, autobiography, fiction, and case studies. We use English past tense forms for their hypothetical meanings in contexts where we are predicting, imagining, or supposing what might happen.

As Larsen-Freeman points out, thinking about grammar in terms of form, meaning, and pragmatics provides us with a strategy for understanding the grammar of the language we are teaching and for analyzing our own knowledge of that language. Most of us know more about the forms and meanings than about the use of those forms in context. Thus, the pie chart analysis suggests to us that we need to develop our knowledge of the pragmatics of the forms that we are teaching so that we can give students accurate information and appropriate practice. Understanding the use of forms in context is a powerful tool for foreign language teachers since it provides us with concrete ways to move away from abstract discussion about meanings of forms to more vivid, concrete, and useful contextualizations of the forms.

The relationship between linguistic theories and language teaching is an ambiguous one. The latest, most current ideas about linguistics can provide useful insights into language acquisition and language use. However, linguistic theory is not developed to provide answers to teaching or learning problems but is generally more focused on the nature of language and the biological, psychological, sociological nature of human beings (and closely related mammals). No single approach to linguistics has ever turned the key to unlock the secrets of the language-learning capacities of human beings and human societies. Studies such as Cook (1994) and Hubbard (1994) remind us of the wide variety of linguistic theories currently in vogue in the United States and of the possibilities and the difficulties involved in attempts to apply those theories to foreign language instruction. Thus, we must be careful about rigid and doctrinaire application of our most recent linguistic study.

We must also be careful that we are working from accurate information about the language that we are teaching. Lightbown and d'Anglejan (1985) point out differences between textbook and scholarly description and actual native speaker uses for both question forms and negation in French. When speaking to other native speakers, the French speakers in the studies they report on seldom used the *est-ce que* formation but preferred declarative statements with rising intonation to make *yes-no* questions. Indeed one study found that *est-ce que* was used primarily when native speakers talked with NON-native speakers. As for negation, the studies show that native speakers prefer a single negative form in speech (while using the double *ne-pas* negatives in writing and formal speaking). They comment that "in informal spoken French, the first particle is rarely heard; it is often deleted altogether, and even if the speaker produces it, it is such a reduced form that it is virtually inaudible in speech produced at a normal rate" (p. 424). Thus, learners who are dependent on native speakers for input may not realize that the first particle exists while those who have learned their French in the classroom may sound overly formal because they are using it in the wrong contexts. Lightbown and d'Anglejan also found that native speakers were not aware of these aspects of French and were astonished by the data collected in the research project. The implications for language teachers are clear: we must continue to study research that gives us detailed information about how our languages are actually used, and we must be very careful in distinguishing the ways that the language is used in various contexts.

Communicative competence

The communicative competence model provides a framework that puts the learning of language and grammar in the larger context of learning to communicate using that language (see Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1970; Schachter, 1990). The subsystems that make up communicative competence are generally listed as (1) linguistic competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence (for explanations aimed at language teaching, see Brown, 1994 and Savignon, 1983).

Linguistic competence is the baseline knowledge of and skill at using the linguistic features of a language. Sociolinguistic competence is knowing how to use those linguistic features appropriately in communication contexts. For example, students can learn about appropriate topics for conversation when meeting new people in a new culture—what can you talk about in initial encounters? Or students can learn about classroom use of language in a different culture—who can ask questions of whom in an Italian university classroom?

Discourse competence is knowing how to create and to participate in whole chunks of communication—whole conversations, whole paragraphs, whole telephone conversations, and so forth. A limitation of many teaching techniques and materials, especially those at lower proficiency levels, is that students do not have chances to participate in complete exchanges and negotiation of meaning in the back and forth pattern followed in most communication. It is relatively easy to say one thing in a new language, but ever so much more difficult to understand a response and then to provide another piece of the new language and to understand the response to that and then to provide another piece of the new language—participating in the chaining of utterances that makes up a whole piece of communication. When such activities are not included in a textbook, teachers can provide for them by adding dialogues, skits, role plays, and simulations that build on the content of the textbook but extend the text's activities to provide for discourse practice.

Strategic competence is having (1) strategies for recognizing and repairing communication breakdowns, (2) strategies for compensating for gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and (3) strategies for learning more about communication in that language and in that sociocultural context. How do you know when someone has misunderstood you? How do you repair communication that has broken down? What do you do if you don't know the name of something or the form of a verb you want to use? What kinds of circumlocutions or paraphrases can you use? As successful language learners themselves, teachers of foreign languages can search in their own experience to provide help for students. There is some danger, however, that a successful learner has forgotten the strategies that s/he used at initial stages of learning. Thus, the learning styles and strategies referred to later in this module and discussed in greater detail in another module in this series may help you to provide support for your students.

The communicative competence model can help language teachers look beyond the grammar-centered material that has been the traditional content of many foreign language courses to the other aspects of communication that need to be brought into our classrooms. The model does not imply that grammar should not be taught, but rather that grammar should be folded into the other components that make up the whole that we are teaching. Even in classes for beginners, we can help students learn to use their small initial inventories of vocabulary and grammar in contextualized activities. We can teach students strategies for using small amounts of language for large amounts of communication. We can teach students to have language learning strategies that help them continue to improve as language learners even outside of our classrooms.

Foreign language teaching in the United States has been profoundly influenced by the publication of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (see Omaggio Hadley, 1993 for a complete set of the guidelines and Scott, 1996 for information on the impact of the guidelines on the teaching of writing in foreign language programs at U.S. universities). As a result of the influence of the move to focus on proficiency (and careful definition of proficiency at various levels) and communicative competence (rather than abstract knowledge of grammar rules), many foreign language teachers are putting the study of grammar into the context of the development of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Omaggio Hadley (1993) provides detailed suggestions for embedding grammar in the communication activities done in class and for keeping grammatical explanations focused, appropriate, and brief (see especially pages 490-493).

Implications of task-based instruction for foreign language teachers

The current interest in task-based language teaching illustrates ways in which grammar can be put in contexts based on the needs of learners. "Task-based" refers to the selection of content and teaching activities based on analyses of the uses to which the language-learning will eventually be put (Long and Crookes, 1992 and Scott, 1996). The development of a task-based curriculum requires first a detailed needs analysis to specify the real world tasks that students will need to perform using the language and then the development of pedagogic tasks to use in teaching the knowledge and skill required for successful performance of the real world tasks. Real world tasks for English-speaking students taking introductory courses in a French, German, Spanish, Japanese, or some other foreign language could include using their new language to negotiate travel in a foreign country. However, students who plan to take advanced foreign language courses or who are majoring in a foreign language are likely to face a quite different assortment of real world tasks. Scott (1996) analyzes the writing tasks to be done by foreign language learners taking advanced foreign language courses in U.S. universities—and uses the results of her analysis to make recommendations for changes in the curriculum and materials for teaching foreign languages so that students learn to write in their new language from the beginning of their instruction—as a preparation for the tasks they will be required to undertake in advanced courses in literature and grammar. Thus, courses at different proficiency levels will need to include preparation for different types of tasks—and therefore to require different types of pedagogic tasks to bring the students to the necessary knowledge and skill for success in their communication after they have left the language classroom.

Discourse analysis has provided us with analytical tools that we can use to build profiles of the grammatical characteristics of certain types of communication. Biber (1988) and Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) illustrate the application of these discourse analysis strategies to English-language text—providing a model that can usefully be applied in other language settings. Biber demonstrates a point that is vitally important for all language teachers: different communication types can be characterized by the clusters of linguistic features that are common to those types. For example, academic writing in English such as that found in journal publications of research is generally characterized by use of present tense verbs, lots of nouns, lots of vocabulary, lots of long words, lots of prepositional phrases—and is more abstract and less interactive than conversation. In contrast, English conversation is characterized by linguistic forms that are used for a high level of interaction, with use of first and second person pronouns (*I* and *you*), questions, shorter words, fewer words (more repetition of vocabulary). Such information gives us solid data to use in filling out Figure 1 because we know what forms are being used in what contexts for particular meanings. Then we can cluster those forms together for the focus of lessons and materials when our students' needs are for the development of particular discourse types.

Thus, language teachers and materials writers need to move away from the idea of grammar *in* context toward the concept of grammar *from* context. Grammar in context has built its materials and lessons by selecting forms first and then seeking meanings and contexts for those forms. Discourse analysis tells us that a more authentic approach to language will start from discourse (that is, from context) and then move to form and meaning. In fact, a reformulation of the three subdivisions of grammar (Figure 1) might be useful for language teachers by getting us to look first at discourse settings and then at the language needed to communicate in those situations. In this reorganization of the pie chart (see Figure 2 at the end of the text), the form and meaning chunks are collapsed into one area, and the arrow points in only one direction, representing the move from discourse to form+meaning. That is, forms get their meanings in contexts, and contexts are the places where teachers do the needs analyses that lead to the definition of real world tasks that then lead to the specification of the language that must be taught for students to learn to carry out those real world tasks.

Errors and error correction in foreign language instruction

New teachers of foreign languages very quickly face the problem of dealing with the errors that learners make as part of the language learning process. Discussions of errors and error correction are abundant within the literatures on first and foreign language acquisition (see Ellis, 1994 for a summary of the issues and research on error types and error treatment and Scott, 1996 for a summary of research and practice in making corrections in foreign language writing). While there is little agreement on the answers, the following questions continue to be considered:

1. How is "error" best defined?
2. What is the role of the teacher in helping students to recognize errors?
3. What is the role of the teacher in helping students to learn to correct those errors?
4. What is the role of the learner in recognition and correction of errors?
5. How does error correction differ in teaching different skills—in teaching reading and/or writing as compared to teaching spoken communication?
6. What are the various types of errors (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and so forth)?
7. How can the various responses to errors be categorized?
8. What types of corrections actually lead to improved accuracy and fluency in language use?

What we really know is limited to all too few certainties: At all proficiency levels, learners produce language that is not exactly the language used by native speakers. Some of the differences are grammatical, while others involve vocabulary selection and mistakes in the selection of language appropriate for different contexts (errors in style and usage—in the discourse and sociolinguistic aspects of communication in a foreign language in a foreign culture).

Most learning occurs both in sudden rushes of easy acquisition and in halting steps that involve making errors, learning to recognize those errors, finding out how to do things more like native speakers, and gradually becoming more consistent in using the language accurately and fluently.

In addition, we recognize that teachers have two different types of responses to student production of the new language. Teachers reply by being emotionally supportive (affective responses) or by giving new information either about what was wrong or about what would be right (cognitive responses).

We know that some language uses give us more time and motivation for seeking out and correcting errors. For example, the writing process often provides more time for attempts to produce language that is linguistically accurate—in contrast to the time limits usually involved in conversational uses of language.

We know that language learning involves some as yet undefined combination of input and output and corrective responses from more advanced speakers—and that accuracy seldom develops without both awareness of *in*accuracy and external motivation to change. Writers have proposed terms such as *treatment, correction, feedback*, and so forth to use as the basis for research and/or instructions for classroom teachers. See Ellis, 1994, for definitions of these attempts at clarification of the correction types.

We know that some students say that they want to have their errors pointed out—and that other students do not like such correction at all. We also know that no one much likes to have an attempt at genuine communication interrupted by a comment on a mistake in grammar or word choice.

We know that students often misunderstand the comments that teachers write on their papers and make corrections based on inaccurate guesses about what they should be changing (see Reid, 1993 for a general discussion of student understanding of teacher comments and Scott, 1996 for a discussion of the impact of corrections on the writing of foreign language students).

We know that making mistakes is part of the learning process. However, we also know that learners have different ways of dealing with errors and that different cultures teach their members different attitudes toward error and how to respond to error.

We know that teachers keep trying to make corrections in their students' speaking and writing but without theoretically sound information about techniques or results.

In the face of all of this lack of certainty, perhaps we classroom teachers should do two things: First, we should not think of ourselves as primarily being "correctors of errors" since we will not be able to carry out that role in anything less than a random manner. Second, we should think carefully about the feedback that we give students, trying to make it as consistent, coherent, and helpful as possible within the range of what we know about the ability of human beings to take in information and to use it. Third, we need to undertake classroom-based research through which we learn about what correction we can provide our students, in what settings, in what ways, that seems to be helpful to them as learners. In addition, we must keep up with the research work being done in this area to learn as much as possible about the processes through which human beings learn languages. Finally, we must be very careful that we are not using error correction in a way that undermines our students' desire to try to communicate in their new language.

Understanding our students: the power provided for teachers from teaching strategies based on learning styles

While all teachers need to be aware of their students, foreign language teachers working in the U.S. context can especially benefit from knowledge about the learning styles and characteristics of their students. Teachers who are from the U.S. need to remember what it is like to be an undergraduate—and the many different kinds of people who can enroll in a particular section of a foreign language course. Teachers who come from other cultural backgrounds need information about U.S. academic culture and undergraduate behaviors in that culture along with information about the learning styles of the students who will enroll in their foreign language classes.

This knowledge of student learning styles and strategies is especially relevant when thinking about the place of grammar instruction in the foreign language class. Some students will benefit from learning rules; others will run away from such information and learn their grammar only indirectly through examples and activities rather than from explanation. Kolb's approach to learning strategies can be helpful in thinking about providing grammar instruction that is effective for students with a range of learning styles and strategies. Kolb (see for example Kolb, 1981a; 1981b) has combined study of learning styles with study of the ways in which learners like to use what they have learned. He reminds us that the purpose of learning is the use of the new knowledge and skills in some manner—and that our students can come to us with very different preferred patterns. These preferences profoundly influence the ways in which the students approach learning tasks. Kolb (1981b) describes a learning cycle that involves the following stages or "modes." (See Figure 3 and Table 7 at the end of the text for applications of Kolb's ideas to lesson planning.)

1. Learning from feeling ("Concrete Experience")
2. Learning from watching and listening ("Reflective Observation")
3. Learning by thinking ("Abstract Conceptualization")
4. Learning by doing ("Active Experimentation")

In the Kolb formulation, our learning styles are actually preferred combinations of these modes:

1. The *accommodator* combines concrete experience with active experimentation—learning by doing but also seeking information from other people. (In his "career map," Kolb suggests that this style is especially effective in management, public administration, educational administration, banking, marketing, government, and business.)

2. The *diverger* combines concrete experience with reflective observation—learning by watching and by working with other people. (In the career map, Kolb suggests that people who prefer this style might be especially effective in the fields of literature, theater, television, journalism, social work, psychology, policework, and nursing.)

3. The *assimilator* combines abstract conceptualization with reflective observation—being less interested in people and in trying things out and more interested in theory is characteristic of this style. (In the career map, Kolb points to education, sociology, law, the ministry, mathematics, physical science, and biology for this style.)

4. The *converger* combines concrete experience and active experimentation—learning from doing with a focus on problem solving rather than on interacting with people. (In the career map, Kolb lists farming, forestry, economics, mining, engineering, computer science, and medicine for this style.)

Kolb emphasizes that we all use all of the stages or modes at different times but that people generally prefer to learn and to use their new knowledge in one of these patterns. For teachers of undergraduate courses at U.S. universities, the information is a valuable reminder that our classes are made up of people whose preferred ways of learning and using what they have learned can be radically different from our own.

In a discussion of the applications of Kolb's work to teaching, Bennett (1996) suggested that we consider, for example, the ways in which different people approach the learning of a new computer software package: (1) some people actually read the whole manual before attempting to use the software—these people can be characterized as *thinkers* who like background information before they try a new task. (2) Other people turn the software on and give it a try; they turn to the manual or to other users only when they get stuck and cannot figure out the software for themselves—they can be characterized as *explorers*. (3) Still a third type of learner would like to watch someone else use the software and to see how an expert does it—these people can be called *observers*. (4) The final group in Bennett's explanation are the learners who need interaction with other people and strong emotional involvement and support during the learning process. They would call for a friend to come and sit with them while they learned the new software together—and so can be called *feelers*.

These types of learners will show up in your language classes, too—the explorers are ready to give communication a try; the thinkers need to know a bit more about the language and about its communication styles before they jump in; the observers would hate jumping in and hate small group work and need to watch some interactions before they are required to do them, benefiting from watching videos or demonstrations (staged with the explorers, perhaps); and the "feeling" students who like to learn with others want to have teams and group activities and warm emotional support from the teacher. Figure 3 and Table 7 illustrate ways that information about students' preferred learning styles can be used by language teachers.

Practical Applications

Examples and exemplification in the foreign language classroom

While in lower division undergraduate courses, we are often constrained in our selection of classroom activities and content by required textbooks, we have more flexibility for creative teaching than many of us are initially aware of. One of the most important roles of the language teacher is that of "provider of examples." Yet teachers seldom put much thought into the examples that they provide in foreign language classes—other than wanting them to be linguistically accurate.

Table 1 (at the end of the text) was developed to provide language teachers with an overview of the issues involved in the selection of good examples (Byrd, Liu, Mobley, Pitillo, Silva, and Sun, 1993). All teachers need to plan their examples carefully around two basic principles:

1. The examples must be accurate and appropriate. They must present the language accurately, be culturally appropriate for the setting in which they are used, and be to-the-point of the lesson.

2. The examples should be used as a teaching tool. Examples are presented in every class and give the teacher multiple opportunities to present vocabulary and cultural information. By focusing the examples on a particular theme or topic, the teacher can dramatically increase the encounters students have with particular information and vocabulary. For example, a teacher of French could use examples focused on several aspects of life in France—transportation, food, education. By using these themes repeatedly, the teacher recycles vocabulary so that students have many opportunities to observe that vocabulary in context as well as having repeated opportunities to learn useful information about France.

Teachers should also be aware of the dangers of using randomly selected examples—those that just pop into your mind while you are teaching. Many of us have experienced the negative consequences of providing un-thought-out examples that contain confusing information that then takes the class off track. Almost as bad is the embarrassment of not being able to think of an especially appropriate example.

Analyzing the resources provided in a required textbook

A language classroom, like most other classrooms for that matter, involves the interactions of teachers and students in the carrying out of activities provided for by materials. However, new teachers are also in the initial stages of understanding how to interpret and bring to life the information and activities provided for in their textbooks. Being aware of the range of information and activities focused on grammar (as well as the contextualization of grammar in the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in a textbook can help teachers to know what they already have and to make appropriate choices in adding additional information and/or activities to complement a textbook.

Creativity can be exercised by a teacher in many different aspects of the teaching process. Creation of materials is only one of the many interesting challenges for a teacher. A useful metaphor for the classroom pictures the interaction of students and teacher as a dramatic presentation: the teacher takes the roles of director, producer, and actor while the students are primarily actors but can have other responsibilities for the unfolding action. The metaphor is especially helpful in clarifying the relationship of the teachers and students to textbook materials. The text is a script that needs interpretation and selection before it can come to life. As in the making of films and in the theater, creativity is not limited to the writing of the script, nor are all of the participants expected to be effective writers of the materials upon which the production is based. In the days--and sometimes only hours--before walking into a classroom to use a textbook, a teacher needs to focus on the resources that are available and on plans for turning that script into a class that is productive and satisfying for the teacher as well as for the students.

The following guidelines have been developed to provide guidance for a teacher in developing plans for a course in which a required textbook must be used. In using these guidelines, you will not be evaluating your textbook; rather, you will be inventorying it. "Evaluation" of textbooks is the judgmental process through which decisions are made about liking or disliking, choosing or rejecting a text. "Inventorying" is the later task of learning in detail the resources of content and activities that are provided in the assigned text. Answering questions such as the following, a teacher can develop a descriptive overview of a text that can be a resource for the rest of the term.

1. What is in this book? What resources does the book provide?
2. How does the book organize those resources?

Creating a content inventory

Language textbooks have two basic strands of content: (1) One strand has to do with the language being taught (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.), and (2) another strand has to do with the ideas and information presented in the readings, examples, illustrations, and activities. Many texts also include a third strand having to do with communicative functions (apologizing, introducing, questioning, etc.). Some texts will include a fourth strand having to do with development of particular skills needed by the students in other arenas (academic skills, survival skills, and so forth). Textbooks are usually conceived of by their authors as holistic units--as "books" for "courses." Thus, effective use of a text depends on recognition of the existence of these strands and the ways in which they have been woven together.

Table 2 (at the end of the text) illustrates how a linguistic inventory for each chapter might be organized: (1) the language areas, (2) questions to guide the inventorying of the linguistic materials, and (3) questions to inventory the teacher's knowledge of those areas. An inventory of topical content could be developed using a format such as that in Table 3: for each chapter or subdivision, the inventory provides a list of the topics that will be covered during the term. Similar tables should be developed for other content material provided by the text such as communicative functions, academic skills, and so forth.

Knowing the content of the textbook from the beginning of the term can provide teachers with many different opportunities: the themes and topics used in the text can be used as the basis for examples created by the teacher. In addition, by knowing ahead of time about content, a teacher can have time to make arrangements for special activities that can complement the basic textbook—for example, a film that deals with similar topics might be used to supplement a lesson. The point here is that prior knowledge gives the teacher more control over the content of her/his courses and provides time to make arrangements for special activities. Reading and analyzing a textbook ahead of time gives power to a teacher and a sense of having more control over the course than can occur when a teacher is just working from chapter to chapter and dealing with whatever surprises pop up on a daily basis.

Creating an activities inventory

By inventorying the sets of exercises given in the text, a teacher can make better decisions about which to use and about when to use them. Few textbooks are designed so that all of the materials in them are to be used in a particular term. The author expects the teacher to make informed decisions about which materials to use with particular groups of students. While Tables 2-5 are based on commonly recommended systems (such as the one in Skiero, 1991), the emphasis has been shifted from making evaluative judgments to developing awareness of the range of choices available for immediate use in the lessons planned for this particular academic term. Tables 2-5 show how an inventory of the activities in a textbook chapter might be organized. This inventory provides the teacher with information on activities that can be used for a variety of teaching purposes, in or out of class, in various organizational patterns, and appealing to various learning styles.

Understanding the sequencing and the format of the text

Textbooks are written for the teacher as well as for the student. An inventory can clarify which parts of the text are addressed to the teacher and need to be given special attention by the teacher. At the same time, such an analysis can reveal those parts of the text that appear to be addressed to students but are in fact intended for the teacher. For example, it is conventional to address instructions to the student, but in reality information about how to do an activity is meant for the teacher. Thus, if instructions are given in the target language, they are sometimes more linguistically complicated than the activity that they introduce. The textbook author expects the teacher to interpret the instructions in ways that make them understandable for students. Table 6 (at the end of the text) can be used to find those parts of the text that are intended as practical help for the teacher.

Other resources to use in planning to teach grammar and other materials found in a textbook

In addition to information provided by the textbook itself, another resource in learning about a text will be the other teachers who have used it before and who have participated in the selection process. Often these colleagues can share copies of syllabi and lesson plans to show how they have worked with the text. The program's administrators are additional resources in learning about a text's values for the program and the ways in which it fits the overall goals of the program. Using the information gathered from these sources along with the syllabus for the course, you can make initial plans for the term that will be modified by the needs of your students as well as by your growing familiarity with the resources provided by the text and by greater understanding of the purposes of the course and of the overall program.

The completed inventory (Tables 2-6) will reveal areas of the text that the teacher might choose to supplement with other materials. That is, the inventory can be used as the basis for a plan for choosing additional materials to complement the resources already available in the text. For example, if the text has a variety of pair work for practice of communication, the teacher does not need to provide additional such materials. That same text might not include as much work as the teacher would like for assessment of the students' linguistic knowledge.

It is important to exercise good judgment about supplementing materials. Swales (1980) noted that some teachers and programs in English for specific purposes developed materials locally that did not seem much different from or better than the materials already available in published textbooks. He noted that so much energy was given to the creation of materials that not enough time and energy were left over to think about the most effective ways in which to use those materials. The textbook inventory is intended to help you avoid this waste of time, energy, and resources. With detailed knowledge of what is already available in the text, you can be more efficient in using time to develop additional materials. As importantly, you can have more time for planning creative ways to implement the materials.

It might very well be that initial negative attitudes that some teachers experience toward a new textbook derive from feelings that they have about other aspects of their teaching: fears caused by being in a new situation can be projected onto the textbook, or dissatisfaction about not having been part of the selection process can lead to the rejection of a book. When experiencing such feelings, teachers should be careful about problems that can result from telling students that they do not like the book. Negative statements from a teacher undermine the students' confidence not just in the text but in the course and in the teacher, too. This nonjudgmental inventorying has been developed to provide teachers with a helpful approach to use in taking a clear look at what is really going on in a required text and in making a descriptive analysis of the text to use in planning and carrying out a course that will be useful and pleasant for the students and for themselves.

Supplementing a textbook with additional grammar activities

After you know what resources are provided by your textbook (and any supporting materials that go with the textbook, such as audiotapes, computer programs, and additional activities provided in the instructor's manual), you can make efficient and effective decisions about adding other materials to your classes. There are many published resources in which language teachers can find supplementary activities. These include books such as Celce-

Murcia and Hilles (1988) and Ur (1988), both of which give guidelines for using a large assortment of grammar and other activities that can be adapted for use in many different settings. In addition to published selections of grammar-teaching activities, many teachers also find suggestions for grammar teaching on the Internet through discussion groups for language teachers and through World Wide Web sites—some of which provide teaching ideas and others of which are actually planned for the language learner. Ideas about using e-mail to improve student grammatical accuracy as well as fluency can be found in Warschauer (1995a, 1995b). Finally, other teachers who have taught or are currently teaching sections of the same course are usually pleased to share ideas about activities that have worked well in their own classes.

Pulling it all together: what do I do in class on Monday?

Research has shown that most teachers organize their classes around their students and the activities that they want to do with that particular set of students on that particular day (McCutcheon, 1980). Who is going to be there? What are we going to do together? Thus, planning and delivery of a foreign language class that teaches grammar in the context of communication requires that a teacher organize a class session around the areas summarized in Table 7 (at the end of the text). In addition to these areas of language, content, and learning styles, teachers take certain practical issues into consideration in the lesson-planning process, including a major feature of teaching that experienced as well as new teachers struggle to control--the amount of time allowed for the class.

Building grammar presentation and practice around students and their learning styles

A technique that is used by intercultural communication trainers (Bennett, 1996) can be useful for us as language teachers in finding out about our students—and their ideas about and fears about learning the grammar of the foreign language they are studying. On the first day of class, give out two 3x5 cards (in two different colors if possible). Mention that you would like to know about their attitudes toward learning the grammar of the language and their previous experiences of learning grammar. Ask the students to tell you on one card what they hope to learn in the class and the things that they hope will happen in the class. Then ask them to write for you on the second card the things that make them nervous about the class and the things that they are afraid will happen. The information provided by the students themselves can help in the selection and presentation of activities and information in ways that meet the needs of students with different learning styles.

The Kolb framework also provides a useful strategy for organizing classroom activities to meet the needs of various learners. The framework can help you plan to give variety to the ways in which you present grammatical information and provide for practice and use of the grammar in various types of activities:

1. Explorations: Give the students some opportunities to try to use the language in skits, dialogues, simulations, and other communication settings.

2. Observations: Give the students some opportunities to observe more advanced

speakers through watching skits, dialogues, and interactions but also through watching videos, CD-ROM presentations, or television and film segments.

3. Thinking and knowing activities: Give the students some information about the grammar of the language and about the cultures in which the language is used. But remember that this type of learning is background to moving the learners into actually trying to communicate in the new language.

4. Interactive, emotionally supportive teaching: Give the students a safe place in which to learn because they are going to have to make some mistakes and to learn from those mistakes.

We also need to remember that our students will bring an assortment of preferred uses of their senses in the learning process—visual learners (who like to have things written on the board and who take written notes), auditory learners (who can learn from listening), tactile learners (who like hands-on activities), and kinesthetic learners (who benefit from having opportunities to use their whole bodies in activities such as skits and role plays). Recognition of these different preferences should lead to the use of a variety of techniques in the presentation and practice of the grammar content of a foreign language course.

Building classes around time limits

Experienced teachers have found that students at lower proficiency levels have short attention spans for communication in their new language. Thus, it is often effective to plan classes in segments of 15-20 minutes with each segment clearly set off from the others. For example, a 60-minute class should have three to four segments, each of which can approach the language to be learned from a different angle.

The syllabus says that the grammar content is "X." The textbook provides some information about "X" and some activities for learning to use "X." What does the teacher do next? S/he works out a plan in a mental process that usually involves some written note taking that produces some sort of outline for the class. Such an outline could look like Figure 3, for a foreign language class focused on the grammar content of "X" as required by the departmental syllabus and the textbook. While this sample features the use of a popular song, that is just an example of the kind of contextualization and active learning that is possible in a foreign language class. Any of a variety of activities could have been used, many of which will be suggested in the textbook or in the ancillary materials that come with the basic textbook. The point of this sample class plan is that it includes activities that involve all the language skills and several different learning styles. The teacher is using her/his knowledge of the grammar of the language being learned in an array of activities that together help students learn how the language works and how to communicate in the language.

Conclusion

Teaching grammar turns out to be a challenge that cannot be met just with knowledge about the grammar of a particular language. A foreign language teacher is required to orchestrate a number of important variables into a coherent whole. Table 7 with its list of the variables to be combined into grammar lessons and Figure 3 with its sample of a possible grammar lesson are offered as tools for use by new teachers in trying to keep up with all of these variables in the planning process. A course is made up of a series of class sessions that form a chain of linked activities through which the teacher creates the total package of the course.

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Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar practice activities: A practical guide for teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Warschauer, M. (Ed.) (1995a). *E-mail for English teaching*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Warschauer, M. (Ed.) (1995b). *Virtual connections*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.

Suggested Additional Reading

Celce-Murcia, M. and Hilles, S. (1988). *Techniques and resources in teaching grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The authors advocate an eclectic approach to the teaching of grammar that recognizes differences in learning styles, as well as the social, semantic, and discourse factors that are associated with grammar structures. They provide guidance in the preparation and presentation of a grammar lesson, showing how to match teaching techniques and resources to various types of grammar structures.

Lee, J. F. and VanPatten, B. (1995). *Making communicative language teaching happen.* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

The entire book is a highly useful reference for teachers of foreign languages. Chapters 5-7 are devoted specifically to the teaching of grammar.

Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar practice activities: A practical guide for teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Organized in two parts, "Guidelines" and "Activities," the book focuses on meaningful and contextualized grammar practice. While the sample activities are keyed to specific features of English grammar, the underlying principles may be adapted for the teaching of other languages.

The Author

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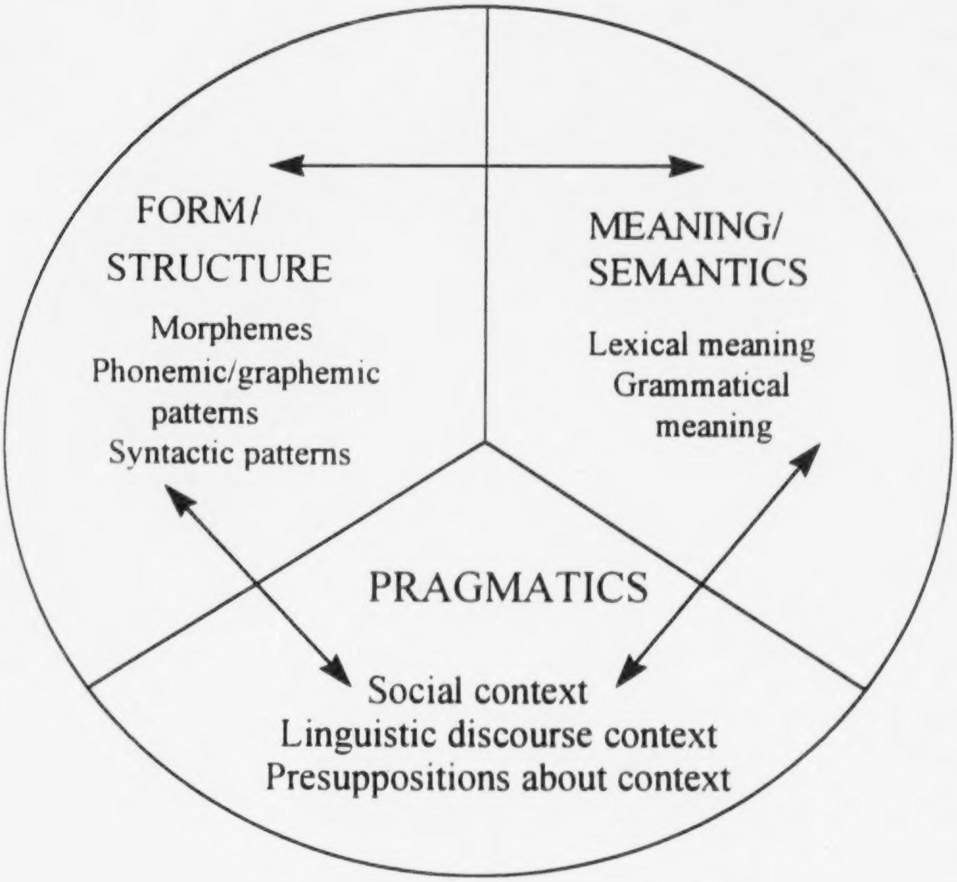
Figure 1 One Way of Visualizing Grammar


FORM/
STRUCTURE
Morphemes
Phonemic/graphemic patterns
Syntactic patterns
MEANING/
SEMANTICS
Lexical meaning
Grammatical meaning
PRAGMATICS
Social context
Linguistic discourse context
Presuppositions about context

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1991). Teaching grammar. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 279-296). NY: Newbury House.

Figure 2
Grammar from Context

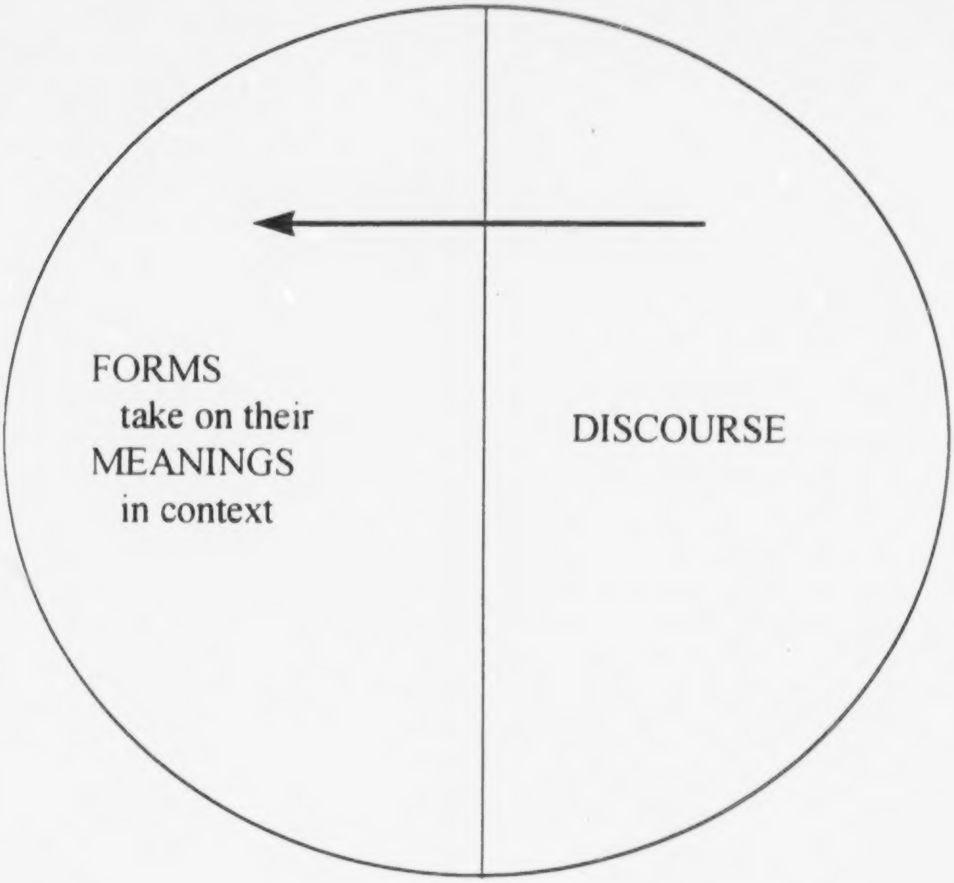

FORMS
take on their
MEANINGS
in context
DISCOURSE

Table 1 Checklist for the Preparation of Examples

I. Accurate	Linguistic Accuracy	The example accurately reflects the language being studied.
		The example uses authentic language.
	Accurate Content	The information in the examples is correct.
	Cultural Accuracy	The examples are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of the students and avoid so far as possible offensive content.
		The examples build on the students' knowledge base.
II. Clear	Free of language not involved in the particular point being illustrated.	Free of difficult or rare vocabulary.
		Free of irrelevant irregularities
	The relationship between the example and the principle is easily perceived.	
III. Interesting	Based on the background and educational, career, or job plans of the students	
	Credible and realistic	
	Novel in content and presentation within appropriate cultural boundaries	
	Humor used carefully with sensitivity to cultural differences	
IV. Usable in other contexts, providing enough information for learning	Interrelated sets of examples for complex content	
	Each aspect of a rule or principle given an example	
V. Contextualized	Commentary or instructional contextualization provided to point out the concept being illustrated	
	Free-standing lists of words and sentences avoided	
VI. Formatted attractively and clearly	Presented in a style that makes the examples easily distinguished from other instructional material	
	Presented in tables and charts where appropriate	
	Divided into appropriate chunks of material	

Table 2 Inventory of Linguistic Content of Chapter (-----)

Language Area	**List of Content:** What items are presented? Is there an emphasis on anything in particular?	**Self-Knowledge Questions**: Is there anything here that I'm not sure about? How can I learn more ASAP?
Grammar		
Sounds and or pronunciation patterns		
Rhetorical patterns		
Reading skills		
Writing skills		
Vocabulary		

Table 3 Inventory of Non-Linguistic Content in Chapter (-----)

Topics or Themes	**Questions about Content:** Be sure to make notes on the location of the topic including page numbers. • What topics are introduced? • What ideas and/or information is presented? • Do these recur in other places in the book? • Do any themes tie any of the topics together into sub-units?	**Self-Knowledge Questions:** • Do I need to know anything else to deal with these topics effectively? • Where can I get that information ASAP?
Topic #1		
Topic #2		
Topic #3		
Topic #4		
Topic #5		

Table 4 Inventory of Activities in Chapter (-----)

Purpose of the Activity	**Location of the Activity:** Note page number and activity number	**Comments**
Introduction of content		
Practice		
Use of Content for Communicative Purposes		
Assessment of Knowledge or Skill		

Table 5 Inventory of Potential Uses for Activities in Chapter (-----)

Location: Page # & Exercise #	In class	Homework	Needs several days	Group	Pair	Individual	Teacher-led	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Combination	Notes

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Table 6 Inventory of Materials Addressed to or Intended for the Teacher

Preface or Information for the Instructor: • Is there one? • What information does the author provide about the use of the book? • What organizational pattern is used? • Is strict sequencing required?	
Table of Contents: Students are unlikely to use this much. Generally, it is designed with the teacher in mind as a way of providing an overview and a guide to the content of the book. • How do the chapters seem to relate to each other?	
Chapters or Other Subdivisions: • How are they organized internally? • Do they seem to follow the same patterns? • Where are the exercises? • How can you tell exercises from other content of the chapters? • What formatting tools are used•bold print, color, etc.?	
Wording of Exercises: The convention is that instructions are addressed to students in the command form. The reason that simple activities sometimes appear to have complex directions is that the author is writing to the teacher but must work within the pretense that the directions are for the students. Thus, for effective use of the materials, the teacher often must interpret the directions for the students. • How are the exercises worded? • What does the author tell you about the activity•how to organize it, materials that might be needed, etc.?	
Index: Few students are skilled users of indexes. Often the index is more important for the teacher. • How it is organized? • What kinds of terms or words are indexed?	
Appendices: Students are unlikely to notice them unless the teacher uses them. • Are there any? • What is in them? • How are they to be used? • How can they be worked into the plan for the course?	
Glossary: • Is there one? • How is it organized? • Is it tied to the text in any way•through numbering or bold type? • What does the author say about using it?	
Supplementary Materials: • Is there an instructor's manual? • How can you get it? • What is in it that can help you plan your lessons?	

Figure 3 Sample Class Plan for a 60-minute Lower-Proficiency Class on Grammar Topic "X"

1. Pre-class chit-chat, using the language being taught (i.e., the target language. Gives the experimenters a chance to try out using the language for communication. Makes the feelers feel included. Gives the observers a chance to watch the language in action. Gets everyone starting to move toward the focus of this class.

2. Opening: information provided in short explanation of a series of examples that illustrate the grammar topic and provide content that is useful for the students. (This activity provides the thinkers and visual learners with some support and gets the rest of the class focused on the work of the day.) [5-10 minutes]

3. Activity #1: Students work in pairs to decide on answers for a series of exercises in the textbook. They write their answers on a sheet of overhead transparency film and then share their answers with the whole class. (This activity involves reading, writing, a little talking and listening, and some human interaction for the students who learn best working with others.) [15-20 minutes]

4. Activity #2: Listen to an audiotape of a popular song in the target language that just happens to have an example of the grammar topic being studied. Tell the students to listen and to write down any words that they understand. Let them listen 2-3 times. Check to see what anyone could understand. Give out a copy of the words. Let them sing along with the tape if any of them are the kinds of students who enjoy such activities, or just play it again, now that they have visual support to know all the words. Ask them to point out the grammar feature being focused on in today's class. [15-20 minutes]

5. Activity #3: Use a written activity (or several if they are short) from the text and have the students work individually to write the answers to give to you. Go from student to student to provide help and to make suggestions. Be sure that this is not a test but a learning activity (to support the students who like to work individually and to find out how they are doing in a brief informal assessment). [15-20 minutes]

6. Closing Activity: Briefly say one important point about the grammar studied in the class and point to how it works in the song. Sing it if you can, or just quote the words. Remind them of the assignment for the next class.

7. Post-Class Activity: Be available for the observers to come ask their questions, and for the students who need emotional support to be sure that they are still on track and in sync with you and the class. Converse as much as possible in the target language.

Table 7 Components of the Foreign Language Grammar Lesson Used in Sample Grammar Lesson of Figure 3

Grammar Topic	Language Skill	Instructional Purpose	Content	Activity Type	Grouping of Students	Learning Styles
Provided by the textbook or the syllabus	1. Listening 2. Speaking 3. Reading 4. Writing 5. Combination (reading, then writing)	1. Introducing 2. Reviewing 3. Practicing 4. Assessing 5. Using for communication	1. Food 2. Animals 3. Art 4. Shopping 5. Family relationships 6. Education 7. Peace 8. The environment 9. etc.	1. Observing 2. Participating	1. T talks to whole group 2. Individuals work alone 3. Pairs work together 4. SS (3-5) work in small groups 5. Whole class does activity together	1. Cognitive (thinking, observing, exploring, feeling) 2. Sensory (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic)

Spoken Language
What It Is and How to Teach It

Grace Stovall Burkart
Center for Applied Linguistics

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Features of Spoken Language 3

- Uses of Spoken Language 3
- Communicative Competence and Communicative Efficiency 4
- Transactional Talk and Interactional Talk 5
- Turn Taking 7
- Formulas in Spoken Language 9
- Maintaining and Shifting Conversation Topics 10
- Scripts for Communication 12

Building Speaking Skills 13

- Teaching Spoken Language for Communication 13
- Striking a Balance 15
- Outlining a Curriculum 17
- Building a Bridge to Communication 19
- Practice Output Activities 20
- Communicative Output Activities 23

Conclusion 28

References 29

Suggested Additional Reading 31

Introduction

This module is based on several assumptions. First, we assume that you are responsible for teaching a beginning or intermediate level course in a college or university setting. We further assume that the main objectives of the course include the development of the ability to use spoken language in a variety of circumstances. Finally, we assume that the teaching approach you will use places a great deal of emphasis on communication.

Learning to communicate in another language takes a long time. It is one of the most challenging tasks your students are likely to undertake. However, as they set about this task, they have two kinds of knowledge working for them. First, they already know how to speak at least one language—their native language. True, their native language (and any other languages they may have learned) will sometimes get in their way as they try to learn another one. But it is also true that you can tap into their conscious and unconscious knowledge about how languages work to help them learn the new language. This leads to the second factor working for your students. Since they are young, relatively well educated adults, they have learned how to use their cognitive skills to analyze unfamiliar ideas and experiences and integrate them into their existing knowledge. You can help them use these cognitive abilities to build a road map through the uncharted territory of the new language.

The organization of the module is simple. First, we will look at several features of spoken language. Then we will talk about some types of learning activities that build skills for speaking.

As you read about spoken language and participate in the suggested discussions, you will probably become aware of some things about spoken communication that you have never considered before. The consciousness raising process that we use here should suggest similar strategies that you can use with your students. You can activate the cognitive processes that will make them better language learners.

The choice of learning activities to present in the later sections of the module was motivated by two considerations. First, we recognize that students need controlled practice with new language forms, but they also need opportunities to create and innovate with the language, opportunities to express their own thoughts. Second, we further recognize that your own language learning experiences may not have regularly included these more creative, innovative activities. As a consequence, you probably need more discussion of how to manage such activities in your classes and hints on how to make them succeed.

Prepare now to broaden your understanding of spoken language and to learn how to lead your students to become better and more confident speakers.

Features of Spoken Language

Uses of Spoken Language

What kinds of talk do you engage in during the course of a day or week? You may be surprised at the number and variety of spoken transactions in which you become involved. McCarthy (1991) suggests several types of speech that are probably among the most frequent (as yet, no one has produced a reliable frequency count):

- casual conversation (with strangers, friends, and intimates)
- monologues of various kinds (speeches, stories, jokes)
- telephone calls (business and private)
- service encounters (in shops, ticket offices, etc.)
- language in action (talk that accompanies actions such as demonstrating, assembling, cooking, etc.)
- organizing and directing people (at work, in the home, in the street)
- interviews (jobs, journalistic, in official settings)
- classroom talk (classes, seminars, lectures, tutorials)
- rituals (church prayers, sermons, weddings)

Even this partial listing reminds us that spoken language has many uses. In addition to its countless uses, another characteristic of spoken language is the range and subtlety of variation we discover as we compare one kind of talk to another, or as we look at one particular kind of talk in more detail. To see if you can discover some of this variation, discuss the following questions with one or two of your colleagues.

Questions for Discussion

In what ways is a particular kind of talk likely to change as we change the roles of the participants?

- How is a casual conversation between strangers different from one between friends?
- Does a doctor talk to a patient as a host would talk to a guest?
- What topics occur in conversations between waiter and diners? ticket agent and travelers? reservations clerk and hotel guests?

What connection is there between the kind of talk and the setting in which it occurs?

- Would you expect the same kinds of talk between co-workers in an office and a team of construction workers on a job site?
- How does a lecture differ from a seminar?
- Would you tell the same kinds of jokes in a church and at a cocktail party?

continued on next page

How does the kind of talk limit the topics and themes that are introduced?
- How does a job interview differ from a reporter's interview of a famous author?
- What topics are you likely to bring up in a social phone call that you wouldn't talk about in a business call?

How do language functions vary from one kind of talk to another?
- Can an employer express displeasure with an employee's work in the same way that a parent scolds a child?
- How do a campaign speech and a sermon compare with regard to the ways they try to persuade their audiences?

By asking questions such as these, we begin to discover how speakers adapt their language to accommodate many varying factors. Spoken (and written) language changes according to the number of participants involved and the social and psychological roles they play in relation to one another. Settings, topics, and functions interact with participants in intricate ways. Competent speakers of a language have learned to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason. Non-native learners of a language need to become conscious of such adjustments and accommodations in order to avoid creating misunderstanding or giving unintentional insult to those with whom they are speaking.

Communicative Competence and Communicative Efficiency

The ability to adjust and accommodate one's language to the context is part of what is called *communicative competence*, a concept that has evolved over the years (Hymes, 1971; Canale and Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1972, 1983) to encapsulate the various kinds of knowledge that underlie language proficiency. Proficiency in a language goes beyond knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary, which we may call *linguistic* or *grammatical competence*. Because language does not occur in random series of unrelated sentences, we also have to know how to interpret sentences within a larger linguistic context and how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole. This is called *discourse competence*. Furthermore, as we have already seen, proficiency includes knowledge of how to use and respond to language appropriately, taking into account settings, topics, functions, and role relationships. This sort of knowledge is called *sociolinguistic competence*, a term that emphasizes the importance of the social context that surrounds the use of a language. And finally, because there are often breakdowns in communication and gaps in the other kinds of competence, a fourth kind of knowledge, called *strategic competence*, is needed. This includes the ability to detect and repair communication breakdowns, to find alternative ways of saying things when words or forms fail you, and even to use nonverbal means of communication if necessary.

In short, "mastering" a language (if we dare to use such a term) implies being able to produce, in a wide variety of circumstances, grammatically correct, logically connected sentences that are appropriate to the context. You may want to add the requirement of acceptable pronunciation, if the circumstances call for spoken communication. If the truth were told, not all native speakers have an expert command of their own language, and to develop a high level of communicative competence in a second language is a daunting challenge. In fact, most researchers into second language acquisition would probably agree with Larsen-Freeman (1991:337) that "For most adult learners, complete mastery of the L2 [second language] may be impossible." Amplifying this statement, she goes on to say, "Teachers obviously should encourage learners to go as far as they are capable of going in the L2, but teachers should also be realistic in their expectations."

In the classroom, then, teachers and learners may aim to develop all aspects of communicative competence to the highest degree possible. At the same time, being realistic in their expectations, both teachers and learners may want to keep in mind the more workable alternative of "communicative efficiency" (Harmer, 1991). The idea behind communicative efficiency is that learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should strive to avoid confusion in the message (due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary) and to avoid offending communication partners (due to socially inappropriate style). While learners may not become as communicatively competent as a native speaker of equivalent educational background, they should always seek to be as communicatively efficient as possible, and it is reasonable to expect communicative efficiency to increase as learners progress in their language study.

Transactional Talk and Interactional Talk

Looking again at the various kinds of talk listed at the beginning of this module, we can point out that they differ in yet another way. Linguists who analyze spoken discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983; McCarthy, 1991—among others) make a general distinction between *transactional talk* and *interactional talk*. The main purpose of transactional talk is to get business done. We could say that transactional talk is message oriented: it is important that the message is clearly expressed so that there is less chance for misunderstanding. Interactional talk is much more people oriented: its main purpose is to establish and maintain social relationships. Precise understanding is not required, and conversation partners allow each other a lot of vagueness and even inaccuracy. Typically, no one challenges the other speakers, since the general function of interactional talk is to lubricate the social machinery, not to convey information.

It is probably true that in all natural languages we may find both transactional and interactional talk. However, analysts are quick to point out that "talk is rarely all one thing or the other" (McCarthy, 1991:136). "[E]ven in the most strictly 'transactional' of settings, people often engage in interactional talk, exchanging chat about the weather and many unpredictable things." In this regard, you might like to try a small-scale social experiment. The next time you hand your purchases to a check-out clerk, try opening the transaction with a standard social formula such as, "Hi, how are you today?" Compare the general quality of the transaction to another occasion when you skip the social formula.

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The degree of mixing of interactional and transactional talk varies from one culture to another, and from one situation to another within a culture. In the American business world, two speakers in a telephone call are likely to minimize interactional talk in favor of getting directly to the point of the call. The same two people meeting for a business lunch may range over a number of trivial topics before reaching any items of business, and the lunch usually ends with still more inconsequential talk. In other cultures, all interactions and transactions begin with several almost ritualized exchanges whose omission would be unthinkable. The appropriate mix of interactional and transactional talk is just one more source of variability to which the language learner must be alert. The teacher must also be alert, making sure that students have adequate practice in both forms of talk.

Interactional talk, and many kinds of transactional talk as well, are interactive. That is, communication requires cooperation between partners who work together to construct the interaction or transaction. Although it sometimes happens that one of the speakers assumes the initiative and plays a dominant role, the other participant(s) do not listen in silence. They must assume the role of junior partner, filling the short pauses with appropriate minimal responses. Brown and Yule (1983:28-30) point out how useful such responses can be for beginners who are trying to hold up their end of the conversation. You can help your students build up a stock of responses similar to the following expressions in English:

- agreeing to cooperate or not: *yes, of course; okay; sorry, I can't; I'm afraid not*
- agreeing with what was said: *absolutely; yes, that's right; yes, I do; yes, he was*
- politely disagreeing: *well, not really; perhaps not quite as bad as that*
- indicating possible doubt: *really?; are you sure?*
- expressing an opinion: *really nice; very nice indeed; not very nice; very bad; really quite nasty*
- stalling while planning one's own turn: fillers: *well; uhhh; ummm*; prefabricated phrases: *of course; it's clear that; I suppose; I think*

And of course, it is extremely useful to know attention signals such as the "uh-huh" we use in English.

Questions for Discussion

The following transcription of a conversation (Brown and Yule, 1983: 5) illustrates some of the features of spoken language that we have just examined. So that you can get more of the flavor of the actual conversation, the usual punctuation is omitted; however, three different pause lengths are indicated: a hyphen (-) indicates a very brief pause, a plus sign (+) indicates a short pause, and a double plus (++) indicates a long pause.

- First read through the whole conversation to answer this question: Is this an example of transactional talk or of interactional talk? Why do you think so?

continued on next page

- Read through the conversation again. This time underline all the examples you can find of vague expressions or non-specific language. Examples: In David's fourth speech we find "they," "do it," and "for that." You have to interpret these terms by reference to the context. Also "sort of supply" is less precise than "supply" alone.

- Discuss the terms you underlined and explain how the context makes them understandable. Or does it?

- Who is the "junior partner" in the conversation? In what ways do the junior partner's contributions support the "senior partner"?

David: on occasion we do a bit of reading along there +
Kate: uh huh
David: and we're all sort of called on to do that from time to time
Kate: what does that involve
David: well + one of our main jobs in the Botanics is writing for the flora of Turkey +
Kate: uh huh
David: they haven't got the scientists to do it so + we sort of supply the scientists for that +
Kate: uh huh
David: well when + you've got all the scientific work written up - we sort of check through it and one - reads and the others +
Kate: oh I see you read aloud
David: uh huh that's right
Kate: I see
David: and then you sort of switch back and forward like this +
Kate: uh huh + and that doesn't bother you
David: it does actually (laughter) I'm terrible at it + but I don't know +
Kate: even when it's something you're interested in +
David: well - it makes it a bit easier to read certainly but + uhm just because you're reading to somebody else you feel + a bit uneasy somehow
Kate: uh huh
James: I think it comes from + having to stand up and read in school +

Turn Taking

Another feature of competence which speakers of the same language tacitly share is rules of turn taking. English—like many other languages—favors the rule of "one speaker at a time," so in spoken interactions in English there will usually be few if any instances of speakers overlapping each other. However, in some languages, as Fasold (1990:72) says, "simultaneous talk is valued, even required." Even in English, there are exceptions to the one-at-a-time rule. Simultaneous talk in English may consist of "brief, quietly uttered

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expressions of support for the current speaker, such as 'yeah,' 'mhm,' or brief restatings of the current speaker's most recent thoughts" (Fasold, 1990:70-71). Or overlap may be much more extensive than this. Tannen (1986:188) describes a "high involvement" conversational style typical of many New Yorkers, in which it is appropriate "to talk along with others as a way of showing enthusiasm, understanding, and rapport." One partner may anticipate the end of another's sentence and chime in for the last few words. A partner may even fire an "interrupting" question at the current speaker, who may smoothly incorporate an answer into the ongoing talk, or else ignore the question until a convenient later point (Fasold, 1990; Tannen, 1990).

Turn-taking rules, rate of speech, usual length of pauses between speakers—these are characteristics of the spoken language which ordinarily do not receive much attention in language courses. In fact, written representations and tape recordings of dialogues that are specifically designed for pedagogical purposes are likely to depict the speakers politely alternating with each other and smartly taking up their own turns as soon as the current speaker has finished. Audiotape recordings and videos of authentic conversation are a valuable antidote to such distortions introduced by pedagogical materials. While learners may not be able to emulate exactly what they hear and see, at least they will not be taken by surprise when they encounter natural native speaker behavior.

Students need to be made aware of possible differences in turn-taking rules. A good way to begin is by raising their consciousness about turn-taking behavior in English. With this information as a background, they can then be led to observe video- and audiotapes of natural communication in the target language more closely, looking for signals of turn taking in the speakers' behavior. McCarthy (1991; 127-129) describes some of the ways in which participants in a conversation or discussion in English organize themselves to take turns.

1. People take turns when they are selected or nominated by the current speaker. A speaker may say "I wouldn't want to be in his shoes, would you?" or "Carol hasn't said what she thinks of the movie yet," thus tacitly offering a turn to another speaker.
2. People may select themselves to take the next turn, if it appears that the current speaker's turn is coming to a close. For example, in English certain changes in pitch level signal the end of an utterance and the possibility that the speaker is ready to yield the floor to another participant.
3. If the flow of conversation prevents a participant from getting a turn, there are verbal and nonverbal ways of doing so. Nonverbal means include an audible intake of breath (as if preparing to speak), a movement of the hand (perhaps a vestige of the classroom behavior of raising one's hand to be called on), and eye contact with the speaker. Verbal means must be appropriate to the situation. They range from "I wonder if I might say something," to "Shut up, will you? I can't get a word in edgewise."
4. There are also ways that speakers can ensure that they will not be interrupted until they have finished their turn. One technique is to set up sign posts such as: "I'll try to be brief, but there are a number of things I'd like to say." "My second point is..." "Just one last point, and I'll finish."

When observing turn-taking behavior in another language and culture, students need to be especially alert to norms that conflict with the behavior they are accustomed to in their own language and culture. For example, although the norm in English is that turns usually do not overlap, it is also the norm that silences between turns are quite brief—on average, less than a second (McCarthy, 1991). In other cultures (e.g., among the Japanese), there is much more "thinking time" before a response.

Formulas in Spoken Language

We have considered turn-taking behavior from the point of view of how people know when it is their turn to talk, how they interrupt another speaker's turn, and how they protect themselves from being interrupted. Now let's look more closely at how speakers follow up on what the other participants in the conversation are saying. Often, the relationship between a speaker's turn and the one that follows it is quite predictable. McCarthy (1991) lists a few examples of such mutually dependent pairs, in which a given type of utterance expects a certain type of response.

Utterance Function	Expected Response
greeting Good morning.	*greeting* Good morning, Ted.
congratulations Glad to hear you passed the bar exam.	*thanks* Oh, thanks very much.
apology Sorry I'm late.	*acceptance* No problem.
inform Frozen foods are in aisle five.	*acknowledge* Thanks.
leave taking So long.	*leave taking* Yeah, see you tomorrow.

As with other aspects of turn taking, you can make your students aware of these highly predictable exchanges in English and then help them to recognize and learn similar exchanges in the target language. Writers of language learning materials recognize the existence of such mutually dependent pairs and often incorporate them into their lessons as formulas to be memorized.

As investigators have studied the structure of discourse, they have found that somewhat longer stretches of conversation may also have a relatively predictable structure. In the sample formulas listed above, we find a two-part exchange: the apology "Sorry I'm late."

followed by the response, "No problem." Frequently, however, the apology part of the exchange is longer than this, and the expanded form follows a rather common pattern (Meloni, Thompson, and Beley, 1982):

1. An expression of regret or a request for forgiveness
   I'm really sorry.
   Please forgive me.
   I apologize.

2. An excuse, a reason, or a statement of responsibility
   I was so busy that I forgot.
   I didn't mean to do it.
   It was my own fault. I was so tired last night that I forgot to set my alarm clock.

3. A promise to improve, or a promise not to do it again
   I assure you it will never happen again.
   I give you my word I'll be on time from now on.
   I promise I won't forget again.

4. An offer to do something to improve the situation
   I'll stay late tonight to finish the report.
   I'll buy you a new dish.

Putting all the pieces together, an expanded apology might be:

> I'm sorry I missed our meeting this morning. I was so tired last night that I forgot to set my alarm clock and I overslept. I won't let it happen again. I could meet with you after lunch, if you're free.

For exchanges involving apologies, compliments, invitations, suggestions, agreements/disagreements and the like, you can make your students aware of the parts of the exchanges and use learning activities to show them how to manage and vary the exchanges.

Maintaining and Shifting Conversation Topics

Most of spoken discourse is not as predictable as the examples we have just seen. Even so, when conversation is proceeding smoothly, the participants know how to follow up on one another's utterances. They can also recognize when a topic of conversation has been exhausted and shift the talk onto a new course. The following example, adapted from McCarthy (1991) illustrates how this may be done.

> A group of people are having New Year's drinks together. Ted has been telling the others how his baggage got sent to another airport on a recent skiing holiday.

Topic 1

Ted: ...no bother to me, because I happened to have spare socks and underwear in my carry-on bag.

Carol: Ah, I see, that was in your hand luggage, was it?

Ted: And I had my toilet kit with me.

Carol: Yeah, it's a good idea to take a few basic things in the hand luggage, isn't it, I think in case of that.

Ted: Yeah, well it's usually the things you need first, you see. Sometimes you don't have time to unpack all your suitcases when you arrive.

Carol: Still, pretty horrendous, though.

Ted: Oh, it was very unsettling...still, so many other unsettling factors I didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels that day.

Carol: Mmm...

Topic 2

Frank: Do you do a lot of skiing, then?

Topic 3

Ted: I go each year, yes...it's my only chance of getting my wieght down, you see. And it isn't the exercise that does it, it's the fact that the meals are so far apart.

Frank: (laughs)

Sue: Yeah?

Topic 4

Ted: Yes, I'm not joking...if we eat say, breakfast eight, lunch one, evening meal six, perhaps a snack after that then you're eating four times a day but...

Frank: You'd never get any skiing in, would you?

Ted: Well, in these places, you breakfast at eight, well, half past eight, ...(etc.)

The overall topic is "Ted's recent holiday," but within a short time, the conversation progresses through four subtopics: lost baggage, skiing, weight watching and exercise, and meal times at hotels. How do the participants know when it is permissible to shift the topic? How do they know what topic can appropriately follow what has just been said? The signals are there, for those who know how to pick up on them.

Notice that, at the end of the first subtopic, both Ted and Carol use the word "still." This would be spoken with a falling pitch, followed by a slight pause (indicated by the comma after "still"). This serves as a boundary marker, a sign that the topic has run out. Other words in English that can have the same function are "so" and "anyway." Ted and Carol also give a summary or evaluation of what has gone before. This is another way of closing a topic.

Responding to these signals, and to the slightly longer pause indicated by the ellipsis (...) after Carol's "Mmm," Frank changes to the second subtopic, skiing, which is not a completely new idea because the lost luggage anecdote is part of Ted's skiing holiday. When speakers shift the topic they commonly use the device of tying it to some element of the preceding conversation.

Ted doesn't stay with the new subtopic for long. He answers "I go each year, yes," followed by a short pause, then segues rapidly to the third subtopic, weight watching and exercise. After a quick exchange among Frank, Sue, and Ted, followed by another pause (...), Ted shifts to the fourth subtopic, meal times at hotels. The third and fourth subtopics are associated in Ted's mind with the second. These rapid shifts (second subtopic to third, third subtopic to fourth) occurring within the turn of one speaker do not seem unusual. They are extremely common in this kind of interactional talk.

Scripts for Communication

Most second or foreign language learners would probably agree that learning to carry on conversations like this one is an elusive skill. Plenty of support is called for during the learning process, both in the form of consciousness raising about the distinctive features of the language and in appropriate practice to become comfortable in managing them. Before we discuss the ways of practicing language, however, let's look at one more feature of spoken language that you can call to your students' attention.

As we grow up in a particular speech community, we come to share many expectations about the kinds of verbal exchanges that we are likely to encounter. These expectations make up part of our background knowledge about our culture. We are familiar with dozens, possibly hundreds, of potential communication situations, each of them associated with a somewhat predictable set of actions accompanied by spoken language. Researchers have given various names to this kind of knowledge, but one name that seems particularly appropriate for spoken language is "scripts." Richards (1983:223) talks about scripts from the perspective of listening comprehension:

> Much of our knowledge of the world is organized around *scripts*, that is, memory for typical episodes that occur in specific situations. Our knowledge of dentist's scripts, cinema scripts, library scripts, drugstore scripts, school scripts, meal scripts, and so on, enables us to interpret a great deal of the language of everyday life....But if we lack a relevant script, comprehension may be difficult.

Thus, knowledge of the "script" for a situation considerably eases the communication load, even in one's native language. It not only helps us to interpret what others say to us, but it also prepares us with a stock of language that we can use in response. In speaking a second or foreign language, we may run into problems caused not just by lack of language but also by lack of familiarity with the appropriate script. This is another argument for giving students opportunities for practice with extended stretches of discourse and for making them conscious of the distinguishing aspects of different communication situations.

Questions for Discussion

This exercise will allow you to explore your knowledge of "scripts" in English. Divide into small groups that work independently of one another. There are two objectives: (1) to recreate the language associated with a particular script; (2) to compare the results obtained by your group with those of other groups.

- You arrive for dinner at the home of friends. Although you have known them for several months, this is the first time you have been at their house. Create a short conversation (4-6 speeches) that would take place just as you arrive and enter the house.

- You feel that the evening is drawing to a close and that it is time for you to leave. What do you say? How do your hosts respond?

- You had a good time at your friends' home. You don't feel that a written thank you is called for, but you do want them to know that you enjoyed the visit. You see your hosts the next day. How do you express your thanks? How do they answer?

Did you find it easy or difficult to create the conversations for each script? How much similarity was there between your group's conversations and those of the other groups?

Building Speaking Skills

Teaching Spoken Language for Communication

This module on the teaching of speaking, like the other modules in the series, assumes that you will be teaching courses that follow a communicative approach to language teaching. When we teach spoken language for communication, our goal is to enable our students, when they have completed our courses, to use whatever language they have at their disposal to produce spoken messages as they carry out a range of tasks in a variety of contexts outside the classroom. They should be able to use the language to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning. In communicative language teaching, the emphasis is on what the learner is able to *do* in and with the language.

Although there are several approaches to second and foreign language teaching that purportedly focus on teaching the spoken language, in most cases they turn out to have a quite restricted view of what constitutes spoken language and speaking (Shrum and Glisan, 1994). To take one example, the audiolingual method (ALM) was revolutionary in its day for, among other things, giving greater priority to listening and speaking skills than to reading and writing. However, in actual practice "speaking" usually meant repeating after the teacher, reciting memorized dialogues, and practicing cleverly constructed but rather mechanical pronunciation and grammar drills. Learners had few opportunities to use the language for expressing their own meanings in novel communications.

One successor to the ALM was cognitive code learning, which advocated more meaningful use of the target language and more opportunities for learners to use the language creatively. Other successors have proclaimed themselves to be "communicative" approaches. However, even under these approaches, there is often not much time for real communication. Walz (1989) reports on several studies that found the majority of class time still being spent in activities that were not communication. Frequently the teachers themselves were not aware of the lack of communicative activity.

How can we know when we are teaching for communication? What makes a language activity "communicative" and "real"? Taylor (1983:73-74) identifies five features of real communication:

1. Participants deal with stretches of spontaneous language above the sentence level.
2. One of the major purposes of communication is to bridge an information gap.
3. Speakers have a choice not only of what they will say but also of how they will say it.
4. Speakers have a goal in mind while they are speaking—usually the successful completion of some kind of real task.
5. Both speaker and hearer must attend to many factors quickly and at the same time.

It is instructive to judge typical oral activities in the language class in terms of these features of real communication. Discuss the following questions with your colleagues.

Questions for Discussion

Examine the following speaking activities commonly found in the language classroom. In what ways do they fail to meet Taylor's criteria for real communication?

- repeating something modeled by the teacher or a tape recording
- reciting a dialog from memory
- reciting a poem from memory
- answering questions based on a reading selection
- answering questions such as "What day comes after Wednesday?"

As you think of the usual oral activities in the language classroom you may be hard pressed to identify any that require learners to organize and express their thoughts in longer spoken texts, such as instructions, anecdotes, or narratives. Learners may rarely have occasion to produce or respond to spontaneous language. Questions asked in the language classroom are often those for which the questioner already knows the answer—there is no information gap. In fact, in many exercises, there is a single, predetermined "correct answer." Conversation practice does not usually put the learners in the position of having to adapt their messages so as to repair communication breakdowns—to clarify their meanings or to ask for confirmation of their own understanding. How often do oral activities compel the learners to focus on accomplishing an authentic task, such as conveying a telephone message, conducting an opinion survey among classmates, or agreeing on a mutually convenient time for a club meeting?

Striking a Balance

Conventional wisdom used to hold that learners were not ready for original and spontaneous communication until they reached the intermediate or advanced level of language study. ALM methodology, for example, put great emphasis on the possible dangers of such unfettered communication. Without adequate preparation, learners were bound to make mistakes, and committing mistakes, it was feared, could lead to the formation of bad habits. To avoid such an outcome, learners were led through a chain of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities (in that order) and were never required to say anything "spontaneously" that they had not thoroughly practiced in earlier exercises. Some learners did manage to make the transition from these carefully controlled exercises to free expression. Many did not, and many felt the frustration of always having to talk in canned phrases, never being able to "talk off the tops of their heads" (Rivers, 1972).

In reaction to such rigid restraints, some early practitioners of the more communicative approaches adopted an "anything goes" attitude. Learners were urged to focus on trying to get their messages across without worrying about making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. At present, the methodology of communicative language teaching appears to have reached a more balanced position. Methodologists recognize that both control and spontaneity have their place, that sometimes it is necessary to pay close attention to the accuracy of the forms being used, and at other times fluency in expressing one's ideas and feelings is more important.

A balanced activities approach

Harmer (1991:40-42) advocates what he calls a "balanced activities" approach, taking into account language input, practice output, and communicative output. Language input—in such forms as teacher talk, listening activities, reading passages, and the language heard and read outside class—gives learners the raw material they need to begin producing language on their own. Language output forces learners to select and use the appropriate language items from their total existing store. Their ability to use the language improves as the teacher or other communication partners provide feedback on the success of the learners' attempts to communicate.

Language input. Some input is roughly tuned; that is, it is more difficult than the learners' current level of comprehension. Roughly tuned input is often found in activities where the ostensible purpose is learning to listen or learning to read, especially when authentic listening or reading passages are used. While learners will not comprehend every word of such input, at the same time they are unconsciously acquiring new bits of language. In contrast, some input is more finely tuned; it is judged (by the teacher or the textbook author) to be closely matched to the learners' current comprehension level. Exercises featuring finely tuned input are carefully controlled and will usually be found in the presentation stage of a lesson plan. The focus with this type of input is on conscious learning of bits of language: the correct pronunciation of a word, the contrast in the uses of two verb tenses, new vocabulary, useful social formulas.

Practice output. This is a way stage on the path to communicative output. In practice output, accuracy of performance is important. It is designed to make learners comfortable producing specific language items recently introduced, sometimes in combination with previously learned items. Practice output exercises often directly follow the presentation stage of the lesson plan. However, because production is limited to preselected items, practice output cannot be truly communicative.

Communicative output. In truly communicative output, the learners' main purpose is to complete some kind of communicative task; e.g.: "Ask your neighbor to take in your mail, water your plants, and care for your cat while you are away on a one-month vacation." When the focus is on such a task, language becomes a tool, rather than an end in itself. In most communicative output activities, learners will have to call on any or all of the language that they know. They will be forced to develop communication strategies (strategic competence) which they would not otherwise develop if they were limited only to finely tuned input and practice output. In communicative output activities, the criterion of success is whether the learner gets the message across. Accuracy is not a consideration unless the lack of it interferes with the message.

In a balanced activities approach, the teacher ensures that learners get a variety of activities from these different categories of input and output. Most importantly, learners at all proficiency levels—including beginners—will benefit from this variety of activities. Not only is such variety more motivating, it is also more likely to result in effective language learning. As Savignon says (1991:269), "[F]or the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the *integration* of form-focused exercises [Harmer's finely tuned input and practice output] with meaning-focused experience [roughly tuned input, communicative output]." (Emphasis in the original.)

Encouraging communication in the classroom

The techniques that teachers use are often greatly influenced by their own experiences in language learning. If your previous language learning was under an approach that featured strong control over input and output, you will probably find it difficult to give your students free rein to communicate. Bragger (1985) and Lewis and Hill (1992) offer advice on ways teachers should modify their behavior so as to encourage communication in the classroom.

To begin with, when you are doing communicative output activities, instead of drilling or quizzing your students, adopt a conversational mode. When you talk with your friends, you listen to the content of what they are saying. You don't interrupt them to correct their pronunciation or grammar. (If you do, your friends probably think you are impossibly pedantic.) Try to carry this conversational frame of mind into communicative output activities in the language class. Speak to your students at a normal rate of speed, using the language as naturally as you would when talking to native speakers.

When the students are talking to one another don't expect all of them to contribute equally to the conversation. However, when they are not speaking they can be active listeners (junior partners), supporting the speaker with encouraging remarks such as "Really? That's very interesting. What did you do then?"

Conversation and discussion do not always have to be about serious issues. Students are likely to be more motivated to participate if the topic is about daily trivia such as movies or television programs, plans for a holiday or vacation, or news about mutual friends. Weighty topics like how to combat pollution are not as engaging; moreover, they place heavy demands on students' linguistic competence. And don't be afraid to drop a topic if they students' interest begins to fade. In real life conversation, we normally change the subject when our listeners lose interest.

Encourage students to experiment and innovate with the language. Create a supportive atmosphere that allows them to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. Which returns us to the issue of correction of mistakes. Of all activities you do with your students, conversation is preeminently one in which the flow of talk should not be interrupted by the teacher's corrections. Although you won't correct your students while they are trying to communicate, you can make a mental note of any recurring errors. A communicative output activity should be followed by a feedback session in which students verify whether they have successfully carried out the task set for the activity. At this time you can also comment on inaccurate or inappropriate language forms you have noted.

Outlining a Curriculum

Sometimes, the scope of language teaching materials is deliberately limited so as to serve the needs of a particular group of learners who are studying the language for a specific purpose. For example, for specialists who want to keep up with the technical literature of their fields, for managers in multinational corporations who want to conduct business negotiations, for airline pilots who must communicate with air traffic control, or for Peace Corps volunteers who need to talk with villagers about agricultural practices, it is more efficient to use materials that allow the learners to concentrate on the language forms and functions that are most appropriate to their needs.

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For learners whose needs are not so specifically defined, however, the common practice in communicatively oriented courses is to present a fairly wide range of formal and informal uses of spoken language. This immediately raises the question of an appropriate scope and developmental sequence for the features of language that are to be taught. Before the advent of communicative language teaching, courses were usually structured according to a sequence of grammatical features, starting with the "easiest" features and proceeding as far into more "difficult" grammar as time allowed. However, if we are teaching for communicative competence, we have to take more than grammar into account. We need to enable learners to carry out communicative tasks and deal with topics or themes in settings they will find in the target culture. How can textbook writers and teachers decide which tasks, topics, and settings to teach, and in what sequence they should be taught?

Some methodologists (Omaggio Hadley, 1993; Shrum and Glisan, 1994) suggest that curriculum designers use the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1986) as a frame of reference when deciding the focus of various proficiency levels in language instruction. The guidelines characterize proficiency levels for speaking in terms of five criteria:

- the communicative functions that the speaker can handle in the language
- the contexts (circumstances, settings) in which the language is spoken
- the topics or themes of conversation
- the degree of accuracy and appropriateness of the language produced
- the length and quality of organization of the spoken discourse

In particular, the criteria of functions, contexts, and topics/themes can help us to decide the range of spoken language to be reflected in our language teaching materials.

Some communicative functions, such as identifying oneself or seeking information, can be carried out at any proficiency level, with complexity of language and finesse in execution increasing as the learner's proficiency increases. Other functions, by their very nature, place greater demands on the speaker. Among more sophisticated uses of language are the functions of making and justifying hypotheses, and presenting an argument to convince others of one's point of view.

With regard to contexts, at first learners are able to communicate only in very familiar, well rehearsed situations (i.e., situations in which they can anticipate the "script"): at home with family and friends, at school with classmates. Gradually they learn to handle most common social situations: shopping, service encounters, eating out. Ultimately they can deal with the more abstract and cognitively demanding language needed for study and work situations.

In topics and themes, the learner progresses from limited statements about the most concrete objects, places, and people (talking about family members, describing food preferences), to topics requiring a higher degree of social interaction (travel arrangements, health and medical needs), to topics of current personal or public interest (work responsibilities on a new job, the qualifications of candidates running for political office).

Accuracy, and utterance and discourse length improve as proficiency advances. From disjointed utterances of one or two words, often spoken with labored pronunciation, the learner develops the ability to open a conversation, sustain it for several exchanges, and close it off in an appropriate manner. There may still be obvious errors, but the learner has also begun to develop communication strategies to compensate for linguistic shortcomings. Eventually the learner becomes confident in two-way communication, can sustain a coherent monologue such as a speech or narrative, and is quite adept in the use of compensating communication strategies.

Building a Bridge to Communication

In the balanced activities approach mentioned earlier, Harmer (1991) advocates a mix of practice output and communicative output, of activities that familiarize students with specific features of language and activities that approximate real communication. Increasingly, newer foreign language textbooks feature activities that encourage communication, yet teachers may not be as familiar with communication activities as they are with drill and practice. In fact, many teachers may have had unpleasant experiences in previous attempts at "discussion" or "conversation" in the classroom. For these reasons, they may hesitate to attempt communication activities with their students.

In recent years, however, the methodology of communicative language teaching has made important advances. Activities for both practice output and communicative output have become more varied and interesting, and the development of teaching techniques has kept pace with the introduction of new forms of activities. It *is* possible to achieve a balance of activities at *all* proficiency levels; communicative output is feasible even with beginners. In the remainder of this module, we will examine several types of instructional activities that are commonly used in communicative language teaching. We will see how these activities serve as a bridge from the classroom to real life communication.

Before discussing the activities, however, let's examine some of the reasons that communication activities in the classroom often fail. Then we will see what can be done to improve the situation. Pattison (1987:243) lists some of the problems of class discussions or conversations:

1. Organized discussion is often artificial, and doubly so in the foreign language.
2. Large groups make normal exchanges of views and comments very difficult.
3. Not everyone has something to say on the given topic.
4. Not everyone is willing and able to speak spontaneously in the foreign language (or even in their own!).

Questions for Discussion

Think of your own language learning experiences in the classroom, especially the times when "free conversation" was the activity.

- How did you feel about this kind of activity?
- Did you and your conversation partner(s) find something to talk about?
- Did you have to struggle to find the grammar and vocabulary that you needed?
- Did you get to practice some social routines; e.g., offering and accepting or rejecting an invitation, paying and accepting a compliment, making a suggestion?
- Did you feel that you had carried out a real conversation? For example, did you and your partner(s) find out anything that you hadn't known before the activity began?

Ur (1981:3-11) and Pattison (1987:243-244) suggest ways of overcoming these problems. Topics may be provided by the textbook or teacher, or by the learners themselves. But rather than students simply being told to discuss a particular topic, activities are designed so that there is a gap in information or ideas or opinions to be filled, and the outcome of the activities is a decision or series of decisions. The need to fill the gap and arrive at a decision makes the discussion less artificial and relieves some of the students' reluctance to speak.

Other difficulties are overcome in the way that the teacher sets up and leads into the exercises. Enough input (topical information and language forms) is given to the students so that they have something to say and the words with which to say it. Discussion is also facilitated by dividing larger classes into pairs or small groups. Most students feel more comfortable when speaking with just a few partners. Further, in communication activities that involve role play, assuming another persona can also relieve a student's feeling of inhibition in group discussions. As we look at specific types of instructional activities, we will see how these measures help to ensure more and better language output from the students.

Practice Output Activities

We will begin with two types of activities—information gap and jigsaw—which are more than mere drill but which still result in practice output. In both these types of activities, participants complete a task by finding out one or more pieces of missing information, a feature the activities have in common with real communication. However, at least in their simplest forms, information gap and jigsaw activities have the additional purpose of setting up practice on specific items of language. In this respect they are more like drills than communication.

One information gap activity that has many possible variations involves filling the gaps in a schedule or timetable. In one version, Partner A holds an airline timetable with some of the arrival and departure times missing. Partner B has the same timetable but with different blank spaces. The two partners are not permitted to see each other's timetables and must fill in the blanks by asking each other appropriate questions. The features of language that are practiced would include questions beginning with "when" or "at what time." Answers would be limited mostly to time expressions like "at 8:15" or "at ten in the evening."

In another example of an information gap activity, the two partners have similar pictures, each with different missing details. They cooperate to find all the missing details. In still another variation, no items are missing, but similar items differ in appearance. For example, in one picture, a man walking along the street may be wearing an overcoat, while in the other the man is wearing a leather jacket. The features of grammar and vocabulary that are practiced are determined by the content of the pictures and the items that are missing or different. Differences in the activities depicted would lead to practice of verbs. Differences in number, size, shape, and the like would require adjectival forms. Differing locations would probably be described with prepositional phrases.

These activities may be set up so that the partners must practice more than just grammatical and lexical features. "Information gap activities provide a good opportunity for students to learn how to ask for clarification, how to request information, and how to negotiate when faced with misunderstandings" (Shrum and Glisan, 1994:159). These are all functions of real communication. It is even possible to cause students to become more conscious of the sociolinguistic aspects of the interaction. For example, the basic schedule or timetable activity gains a social dimension when one partner assumes the role of a student trying to make an appointment with a partner who takes the role of a professor. Each partner has pages from an appointment book in which certain dates and times are already filled in and other times are still available for an appointment. Of course, the open times don't match exactly, so there must be some polite negotiation to arrive at a mutually convenient time for a meeting or a conference.

Jigsaw activities are essentially a more elaborate form of information gap activities. While the latter usually involve only two, or perhaps three, partners, jigsaws can be done with several partners. There are practical limits, of course: too many partners will only lead to confusion. In a jigsaw activity, each partner has one or a few pieces of the "puzzle," and the partners must cooperate to fit all the pieces into a whole picture. The puzzle piece may take one of several forms. It may be one panel from a comic strip or one photo from a set that tells a story. It may be one sentence from a written narrative. It may be a tape recording of a conversation, in which case no two partners hear exactly the same conversation.

In one fairly simple jigsaw activity, the class is divided into groups of four. Each student in the group is given one panel from a comic strip. Partners may not show each other their panels. Together the four panels present this narrative: a man takes a container of ice cream from the freezer; he serves himself several scoops of ice cream; he sits in front of the TV eating his ice cream; he returns with the empty bowl to the kitchen and finds that he left the container of ice cream, now melting, on the kitchen counter. These pictures have a clear narrative line and the partners are not likely to disagree about the appropriate sequencing.

You can make the task more demanding, however, by using pictures that lend themselves to alternative sequences, so that the partners have to negotiate among themselves to agree on a satisfactory sequence.

More elaborate jigsaws may proceed in two stages. Students are first organized into different "input groups," say Groups A, B, C, and D. After they have received the information on which the task is based, they are reorganized into groups of four with one student each from A, B, C, and D. Such an organization could be used, for example, when the input is given in the form of a tape recording. Groups A, B, C, and D each hear a different recording of a short news bulletin. The four recordings all contain the same general information, but each has one or more details that the others don't. In the second stage, students reconstruct the complete story by comparing the four versions.

As Klippel (1984) points out, jigsaw tasks require students to practice both transactional and interactional language. First, they must understand the information that forms the input for the task and then describe or explain it to their partner(s). The language here is transactional: the emphasis is on conveying an accurate message. Second, they have to cooperate to find the solution, using interactional functions like suggesting, agreeing, and disagreeing. With all instructional activities, teachers need to be conscious of the language demands they impose on their students. If an activity calls for language your students have not already practiced, you can brainstorm with them when setting up the activity to preview the language they will need, eliciting what they already know and supplementing what they are able to produce themselves.

The two types of activities we have just examined both feature one or more information gaps which must be bridged for successful completion of the activity. But as Taylor (1983) points out, gaps in information are just one of the characteristics of real communication. In real communication, language is spontaneous. Speakers have a choice not only of what they will say but also of how they will say it. In contrast, information gap and jigsaw activities are rigged to lead students to practice specific features of language. More importantly, in real communication speakers also deal with stretches of language above the sentence level. They open the conversation, they take turns, they follow up on what the other participants are saying, they change the topic of conversation at appropriate times, and they bring the conversation to a close.

There are still other artificial aspects to information gap and jigsaw activities (Littlewood, 1981). The range of functional meanings of the language used is rather restricted. For example, communication functions such as greeting, inviting, asking permission, and making offers are not likely to occur. The situations in which the language is used are usually quite contrived and more like games than real communication. How often outside the language classroom do people sort out jumbled sentences or discover differences in pictures? In most practice output activities, the participants' social roles are irrelevant to the performance of the activity. In contrast, communicative output activities permit learners to "experience a wider range of communicative needs in situations more similar to those outside the classroom and under the influence of more varied and clearly defined social conditions" (Littlewood, 1981:39).

Communicative Output Activities

Questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and role plays, are all activities that may be used to create communication in the classroom that approaches communication in real life. These activities may be set up so that the participants discover something that they hadn't known (fill an information gap) and accomplish a desired objective (complete some kind of task). The precise language that is used is often unpredictable, and the participants will have to listen to one another and shape their contributions to suit the evolving communication situation. These communicative output activities may be designed so that even beginners gain practice in using the language in an ongoing discourse.

Let's look first at questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, three types of communicative output activities that involve asking and answering questions. Students see examples of these in their daily experience outside the classroom. The print and electronic media frequently report on the results of surveys and opinion polls, and every television network has both news and entertainment programming that feature interviews. Thus students will have a general idea of what to expect in these activities and are likely to participate with interest.

An adapted example from Pattison (1987) shows how questionnaires can be done with beginners. The task set for the activity is to find out when most people get up in the morning. To increase student participation, as well as to provide needed language input, the whole class together decides how to ask the question. They also discuss possible answers and, to inject a note of competition into the activity, each student privately writes down a prediction as to which time will prove most common. Organizing themselves into small groups, the students question each other about their wake-up times. In each group, one member is chosen to report back to the whole class, where one student writes on the board the answers from the groups. When the class results are tallied, students can compare the most frequently reported time with their own prediction.

It is easy to design variations on this activity by selecting topics your students are interested in and for which they can manage the language. Some possibilities are favorite sports, numbers of students in various height ranges, most hated foods, most admired actors, etc. You can also provide language input by tying the topic of the questionnaire to the current textbook lesson.

As more questions are added to questionnaires, they begin to look more like surveys. Topics for surveys may thus be somewhat more elaborate forms of the topics you use in questionnaires. Or you may take inspiration from survey topics you find reported in newspapers and magazines or on television. Pattison (1987) suggests a family survey, a topic that is certainly manageable by beginning students. In small groups, students ask one another questions such as: Do you have any brothers or sisters? How many? Are you the

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oldest/youngest/middle child? In reporting back to the class, students will learn how many oldest children there are, how many only children, how many all-girl families are represented, and the like.

A single survey can generate a lot of student activity. Ur (1981) describes several steps in a survey about television viewing. In small groups, students first brainstorm about the kinds of information they want to collect: how much time people spend watching television, what their favorite programs are, what they think of particular types of programming, and the like. Next, they formulate the precise questions they will ask. Will they use open-ended questions? Multiple choice? Agree/disagree scales? In the third step, the survey is administered; for example, half the groups can interview the other half, then reverse roles. Finally, the small groups reconvene separately, tabulate their results, and prepare a brief report which is then presented to the rest of the class.

Interviews have some of the features of questionnaire activities. The chief difference is that an interview focuses on a single individual, while questionnaires and surveys conclude by aggregating the results for a whole group. As with questionnaires and surveys, before your students begin an interview, you need to be sure that they know and can use the necessary language forms. Klippel (1984) points out that this would include not only the vocabulary and grammar, but also the appropriate ways of asking for clarification, verifying understanding, avoiding a question, hesitating, and similar language functions that are likely to occur in an interview. This language preparation can be done by basing an interview activity on a textbook lesson, by brainstorming likely questions and answers before conducting the interview, or by providing students with sample language forms on cue cards or on the blackboard.

Klippel (1984) describes two different ways of generating questions for an interview. In one technique, each student is provided with an "identity card." The information called for on the identity card may be simple or more elaborate, depending on the proficiency level of the students. For beginning students, there may be just a few categories of information: name, family, hobbies, three things I like, three things I don't like. Each student fills in the identity card with information about himself or herself. Then each student is paired with another and given a blank identity card. The pair interview each other to fill out the blank cards. The identity cards thus play a dual role. They allow students to prepare their answers beforehand and they provide guidelines during the interview.

In a second technique, each student writes down five to ten questions that he or she would like to be asked. The general topic of the questions may be left open, or a topic may be prescribed: for example, travel experiences or reading habits. Students then choose partners, exchange question sheets and interview each other using these questions.

Students can gain a lot of communicative practice by regularly interviewing their classmates. The possible topics for such interviews usually revolve around personal experience: for example, eating out, keeping fit, the worst movie I ever saw. As soon as you feel that your students are ready, you can arrange interviews with visitors. You can lay the groundwork for these interviews by leading your students to brainstorm questions and discussion topics and allowing them the chance to look up any language they think they will need during the interview. It might be a good procedure to assign small groups of students to be in charge of different segments of the interview. As follow-up each group can write a summary of the information obtained in their part of the interview.

When one of the participants in an interview plays the part of another person, it takes on some of the qualities of a role play. Doff (1988) suggests a controlled role play in which one student assumes the part of a character in a written text that the class has shared. The character is interviewed by other members of the class. Here is a sample text that students could work from (Doff, 1988: 235-236):

> If you met 15-year-old Jane Cole in the street, you might not notice anything special about her. But she is no ordinary schoolgirl, because as well as studying hard for her exams, she's training to take part in the European table tennis championship this summer. Jane will be one of the youngest contestants, but those who know her stamina and determination are confident that she will do well. Jane's main problem at the moment is finding time for both table tennis and schoolwork. For the last month, she's been getting up at six every day and doing an hour's table tennis practice before school, and then fitting in another hour in the afternoon.

One student assumes the role of Jane and the others ask her questions about her training, her free time, and so on. They should ask questions that go beyond the text, and the student playing Jane uses her imagination to project herself into Jane's life and provide the answers. This interview-role play can be done as a whole class activity, or the class may be divided into groups, with one student in each group acting the part of Jane. You can use this interview-role play technique several times during a course. All that is needed is a textual source in which there is a clearly depicted main character whose life and experiences may be readily imagined.

Role plays are mini-dramas, usually based on real life situations. Students are assigned roles and put into situations that they may eventually encounter outside the classroom. Because role plays imitate life, the range of language functions that may be used expands considerably. Moreover, the role relationships among the students as they play their parts call for them to practice and develop their sociolinguistic competence. They have to use language that is appropriate to the situation and to the characters. While your students are likely to find role plays a motivating kind of activity, you do have to prepare for them carefully. With adequate preparation, students will be able to launch right into the role play, carry it on with good participation by everyone in the group, and bring it all to a satisfactory conclusion.

The first few times that you do a role play with your students, it may be a good idea to provide them with a script—not a script for a play, with all the lines already written out, but a script in the sense that we used the term earlier—a general description of how the scene will play out. The students may be able to brainstorm the scenario themselves, with a little help from you. At the same time, they can think of the language they may need. For closely guided role plays, students may be given role cards.

An example adapted from Livingstone (1983: 18-23) will show how this preparation may be done. First, the teacher describes the situation:

> The local school district threatens to close your neighborhood school. The building is old and in serious need of repair, and the enrollment has fallen sharply in the last few years. The district office has suggested that the students could be bussed to a newer and much larger school across town. Many parents have protested, and a meeting of parents and teachers is called by the school authorities to discuss the problem.

The roles are: the school superintendent (who chairs the meeting), parents, and teachers.

As a class, the students flesh out some of the details of the situation. Here is what they decide together:

Old School	New School
built in 1923	built in 1995
90 students	600 students
five rooms	fifty rooms (inc. computer lab, art and music studios, etc.)
no special facilities except a small park where students and teachers have lunch, etc.	all the newest equipment, inc. computers and television
used nightly for evening classes and all other community activities	used nightly for evening classes; not used for other community activities

The teacher and students explore the reasons that the school district and superintendent may put forward to support the plan to close the school. What are the disadvantages of staying in the present building? What are the benefits of moving to the newer school? What do the parents think of the plan to close down the school? Do any of them support it? Do the teachers share their views? Can anyone offer an alternative to the plan? This discussion is conducted as much as possible in the target language. If the students lack any bits of language, the teacher may make suggestions, or she may allow the students time later to fill in the gaps.

An alternative to this group exploration of language is to give the students role cards and put them to work in pairs to prepare their roles.

> Role 1
> You are parents of children at the old school. Decide whether you are for or against the move, and list your arguments. Be prepared to put your opinion clearly and politely, and to counter any arguments against it.
>
> Role 2
> You are teachers at the old school. Decide whether you are for or against the move, and list your arguments. Be prepared to give your opinion clearly and politely, and to counter any arguments against it.
>
> Role 3
> You are the school superintendent. You must chair the meeting. You must make sure that everyone's views are heard. You yourself are for the move but must appear to remain neutral. Remember to "open" and "close" the meeting.

The students can make notes during their preparation, but they do not write out a dialogue or series of planned speeches. The two students who prepare for the role of the school superintendent may need a little extra help from the teacher on the language formulas used to preside over a meeting.

When the role play begins, the class splits into two groups, each group composed of parents and teachers and presided over by a superintendent. The two groups run their role plays concurrently, with the teacher standing apart and discreetly eavesdropping on the proceedings. She doesn't interrupt the students, but if either of the groups gets stalled, she may throw in a comment or question as if taking the part of a parent or teacher. At the end of an agreed period of time, the groups wind up their meeting, regardless of whether they have reached a natural closure.

There can be two kinds of follow-up on a role play, topical and linguistic. After a role play like the one just described, it would be interesting for each group to report to the other how its meeting went. What arguments were advanced by each side? Was any agreement reached? Which side carried the day? The linguistic follow-up would depend on what the teacher had noted in the way of language problems as she eavesdropped on the proceedings. For example, she might need to make suggestions on appropriate ways of offering an opinion, or of agreeing or disagreeing with an opinion offered by another speaker. She could choose not to say anything about linguistic features for the moment, waiting instead until a later session of practice output activities to work on the relevant forms.

Role plays can be a lot of fun. They can be designed to be performed by students in pairs or for larger groups. They can be only a few exchanges in length, or they may run on for fifteen or twenty minutes. And although the example given here would probably be more appropriate for an intermediate class, very simple role plays may be performed by beginners. They are a valuable addition to language learning activities at any proficiency level.

Conclusion

In the first half of this module we undertook a consciousness raising exercise. We looked at features of spoken language which you know at a subconscious level but which you probably have never given much thought to. We considered the fact that speakers of a language, as they grow up in a speech community, learn how to adjust the characteristics of their speech to fit the situation. Without giving much thought to the process, they take into account the participants in the exchange, their social relationships, the physical setting, the nature of the occasion, the topic under discussion—all in a mental calculus that occurs almost instantaneously.

We looked more closely at some of the characteristics of spoken language, first making a general distinction between transactional talk and interactional talk. We looked at how speakers organize themselves to take turns as they talk, to shift topics of conversation in appropriate ways, and to run through frequently occurring communication scenarios.

This consciousness raising models the way you can help your students become aware of such characteristics in both their native language and the target language. Being conscious of specific features of language behavior will help them to notice similarities and differences between the language or languages they know and the language they are studying. It is an important resource to call on as they learn to use the language.

As you are now aware, your students need to develop several kinds of competence: linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Although they may not be able to become as communicatively competent as a native speaker of the language in equivalent circumstances, they can learn to use all the language they know at any given time to be as communicatively efficient as possible. You will ensure that their communicative efficiency grows continuously by leading them through both more controlled practice output activities and more lifelike communicative output activities. Learning a language is hard work, but with a balance of practice and communication, it can also be an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

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Chapter 6 treats the developing of oral proficiency from the perspective of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*.

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Listening in a Foreign Language

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Part One 3

- Listening as Process 3
- Developing Strategic Listeners 6
- Determining Your Goals and Objectives: Roles, Modes, Functions, and Purposes of Listening 9
- Matching Your Goals and Objectives: Evaluating, Adapting, and Developing Listening Materials 11
- Planning the Listening Lesson: Pre-listening, While-listening, and Post-listening Activities 14
- Using Video Materials 17

Part Two 20

- One-way Listening 20
- Two-way Listening in the Classroom: Teacher and Peer Interaction 23

Summary 23

References 25

Suggested Additional Reading 27

Tables and Figures 28

Introduction

Whether at work, at play, or in managing our day-to-day life, we use listening far more than any other language skill. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half of their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90 percent of their in-school information through listening to teachers and to each other! However, not all listening is the same: a "Hi! How are ya doin'?" on the way to class will not normally tax our listening abilities, but listening to a lecture or learning a foreign language will. These situations will require a more intense and analytical kind of listening.

We know that listening is requisite to language learning: it provides the aural input which serves as the basis for acquisition and learning, and it enables us to interact in spoken communication. Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching, it becomes essential that we know how to help our students become effective listeners. We hope that his module will help you accomplish just that.

Part One of this module will provide you with background information which will heighten your awareness and understanding of this most crucial language skill. It introduces the process of listening by describing listening and listening comprehension within a cognitive, information-processing framework. Next, listening instruction is presented from a strategic perspective, that of teaching and learning *how* to listen. The section which follows deals with the characteristics and purposes of listening and is geared toward helping you determine listening goals and objectives for your course. Finally, the materials section presents criteria for evaluating, adapting, and developing different types of listening materials, especially video materials.

Part Two presents more practical suggestions, techniques, and activities for working with textbook tape programs and video materials, for teaching and practicing listening strategies, and for two-way, interactive listening in the classroom.

Before we begin examining these topics, pause and think about your own listening behavior, in your native language. Think of it within these situations: Have you ever been in a restaurant and become obsessed with a conversation at another table? Could you understand what they were talking about? What did you do to try to figure out the conversation? How about this situation: You are attending a lecture and taking notes. Visualize your notes. What do they look like? Do you always take notes the same way? What determines how you take notes? Finally, do you listen to the radio when you get up in the morning? What do you listen for? How do you listen? Do you turn on the television instead? Do you watch or do you listen? Do you do both? Your purpose for listening is different in each of these situations, and so are the strategies you use to understand what you've heard. But we don't focus much on listening in our first language. After all, listening is...well...listening: we do it effortlessly, we take it for granted. It isn't until we attempt another language that listening demands conscious effort and at times overwhelms us.

PART ONE

Listening as Process

What is listening?

Listening can be described as an on-going series of processes which occur within the listener. Most descriptions of listening account for four interrelated components: hearing (or perceiving), attending, comprehending, and remembering. Individual physical and cognitive variables as well as situational, motivational, and attitudinal factors mediate and affect all aspects of listening. Thus, background noise or a cold may prevent the listener from hearing adequately; tiredness or lack of interest may lead a listener to consciously or unconsciously "tune out"; lack of familiarity with the topic or problems with vocabulary or syntax may result in miscomprehension; and all of these factors may impede recall.

Listening has also been characterized as a transaction, as it involves a sender (a person, radio, television) and a receiver (the listener). This transaction is defined by the short-lived nature of the message and the receiver's lack of control over what he or she hears. Thus listeners are forced to process messages as they come: (1) immediately, whether they are prepared to receive the information or if they are still processing what they have just heard; (2) without backtracking or looking ahead; and (3) with the sender's choice of features (e.g., vocabulary, structural complexity, rate of delivery). The complexity of this process is magnified in the second language context, where the receiver also has incomplete control of the language.

What is listening comprehension?

Far from passively receiving and recording aural input, listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and their linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Again, this process is influenced by individual learner characteristics such as learning style, strategy use, and affective factors, as well as by variables related to the listening text.

Although comprehension is usually the desired and expected outcome of listening (especially in educational contexts), we will not be surprised by the fact that comprehension is not a precondition of listening. As listening is a covert process, we are not able to observe the listener's progress or developing problems; therefore, we can only confirm comprehension through an overt response—a spoken or written communication, an action, a gesture. It may be helpful to think of the components of listening—hearing, attending, comprehending, and remembering—as operating continuously, but at differing levels of efficiency and success, depending on the host of variables which each listener brings to the task, on the text itself, and on environmental conditions. A most variable and idiosyncratic process indeed.

An information-processing model of listening comprehension

Cognition is the act or process of knowing. Cognitive theory defines language learning as the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill (McLaughlin, 1987). From this perspective, the acquisition of language entails the use of information-processing techniques to represent, organize, transform, and integrate information. Information-processing models are used to represent how new information is acquired, stored, and retrieved from memory (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

The **information-processing model** presented in Figure 1 (at the end of the text) graphically represents listening comprehension in terms of a cognitive skill. This model and the discussion below are based on Atkinson and Shiffrin's pioneering work on the structure of memory (Daehler and Bukatko, 1985). The diagram may be shared and discussed with students to focus and heighten their awareness of what comprehending aural input actually involves. At the very least, it is important that you, the language instructor, have an understanding of the process of listening comprehension. It is important to remember that we cannot directly observe or measure what is happening in the mind and that models such as this are used as metaphors, not depictions of the workings of the human mind. The diagram and discussion below should help you begin to focus on listening as a *process* rather than on listening as a *product*.

In information processing, memory is represented by three separate "stores": sensory or echoic memory, short-term or working memory, and long-term memory. In the first and most basic stage of processing, the listener perceives sounds and retains them in **sensory memory** for perhaps one second or less. At this point, bits of language may be noticed— possibly because of particular features related to already stored knowledge (Gass, 1988), processed further, and recognized as sound patterns. Processed information passes on to short-term memory in the form of words, but information which has not been processed is replaced by later input. It is easy to understand the beginning language student's dilemma: sound is perceived as a continuous stream with no boundaries, nothing to hook onto and pass on to the next stage of processing.

The second memory store, **short-term memory**, is also temporary, but has a larger capacity of about 20 to 60 seconds (Coakley and Wolvin, 1985) and about seven "chunks" of information. It is here that meaningful mental representations are formed. In order to hold more information in short-term memory, groups of items are chunked (organized according to a pattern) into syntactic, semantic, or phonologic units of meaning (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). As your students learn the language, they gain more and better ways to organize or chunk the incoming information into larger units. This chunking process enables them to retain more in short-term memory at one time and to avoid "overload" (Byrnes, 1984), or the information backing up in short-term memory and being lost before it has a chance to be organized. Background knowledge, or prior knowledge of the topic of the input, also helps organize the information into larger chunks. (It was this lack of background knowledge that foiled our attempts to understand what the folks at the table next to us were talking about.)

Two other processes, rehearsal and elaboration, may occur in short-term memory and increase processing capacity. Rehearsal, or actively repeating items, allows information to be maintained longer in short-term memory. This is how we usually retain telephone or other numbers until we can write them down. In the classroom or in individual study, a certain amount of meaningful repetition (where a connection is being made between the language and its meaning) will also facilitate passage into long-term memory. Elaboration consists of relating information to things we already know (for example, mnemonic devices for vocabulary learning). Not all of the information which reaches short-term memory passes on to long-term memory, the permanent store (imagine if it did!), but rehearsal and elaboration help make the chunks more available for transfer.

Only extracted, semantic meanings pass on to **long-term memory**, where an unlimited number of items are held for an indefinite period of time. The mental representations which reach long-term memory are then related and incorporated into existing knowledge. How information is organized and accessed in long-term memory has been of great interest to all who are concerned with how we learn. Theorists have attempted to answer several questions.

Once information reaches long-term memory, is it all stored in the same way?

It has been hypothesized (Anderson, 1980) that extracted meanings are stored as either procedural knowledge (information about how to do things), or as declarative knowledge (information about things). An example of procedural knowledge would be how to recognize regular verbs in the past tense; an example of declarative knowledge would be the meanings of those same verbs.

How are those bits of declarative knowledge organized?

Declarative knowledge is not stored in single items, but in organized mental structures called schemata (singular, schema). These large information structures (which can perhaps be conceptualized as a word web), are organized around a topic or theme and contain many levels of information related to the topic. For example, a dancing schema may contain "sound pictures" of different types of music, dance steps, social situations, feelings and emotions, and any other experiences the holder of the schema may possess. Everyone's schemata are different. Some schemata will be very rich, others will be very lean, and the information contained therein may all be different. Cultural background has a very important effect on a person's schemata. Certainly a Cuban instructor's dancing schema will be very different from her American students' dancing schema.

Do we search through all of our schemata every time we access information?

Some schemata are organized as scripts (situation-specific knowledge about real-life situations), others as story grammars (representations of how various types of discourse are organized). It is believed that listeners generate expectancies of meaning through scripts and story grammars. The closer the fit between what is heard and the sequence the listeners anticipate through their scripts and story grammars, the more successful and efficient will the comprehension of the aural message be. Often one of the first things our foreign language students learn are scripts of greetings and salutations. Once they've learned these scripts, they can process them automatically and devote their conscious attention to other parts of the input.

Doesn't it take a long time to access all this information?

When we initially attempt a task, we have to devote a lot of attentional resources to it in order to perform it. As we learn and practice the task, it becomes automatic and it is performed effortlessly. The more tasks we learn, practice, and automatize in the foreign language, the more attentional resources and memory capacity are available for new information (McLaughlin, 1987).

Developing Strategic Listeners

While the discussion above should serve to make you aware of the complexity of the processes involved in the comprehension of a listening text, it is not designed to scare you from the prospect of getting your students to that effortless level of second language listening proficiency which, after all, you have managed to attain. But first they must take baby steps. Our charge at the beginning stages of listening instruction is to introduce our students to strategies which will enable them to cope with input which they may have only half-understood or perhaps not understood at all.

What are listening strategies?

Listening strategies are **cognitive learning strategies**. They are specific techniques or activities which contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of the listening input (Rubin, 1987). Listening strategies are well known to us as teachers and as students, for they are listening skills or activities such as listening for the gist, listening for detail, making an inference, or summarizing.

These strategies can be classified as either top-down or bottom-up, depending on how the listener processes the input. **Top-down strategies** such as inferencing or predicting, rely on the listener's personal background knowledge and expectations about both language and the world (Morley, 1991). This knowledge allows the listener to interpret the text on the basis of context: the preceding linguistic context, and the situation, topic, setting, and participants. For example, your students are listening to a taped dialog in which Mr. Wong, the director of a secondary school, is introducing Ms. Min, a new teacher, to the rest of the faculty. Based on previous knowledge of the formality of the setting and the participants, and of greetings and salutations, they can expect to hear "How do you do!", or "I'm pleased to meet you!" rather than "Hi!" when the director says, "Let me introduce you to Ms. Min."

Bottom-up strategies, as the term indicates, rely on the actual language in the listening input. It is the understanding of sounds, words, and grammatical characteristics to arrive at meaning (Richards, 1983). Bottom-up strategies include scanning for specific details, recognizing cognates, or recognizing word-order patterns.

While cognitive strategies are tied to specific tasks and applied to specific materials or situations, a second type of strategies, **metacognitive strategies**, contribute indirectly to our comprehension and recall by acting as regulators or orchestrators of all learning. Metacognitive strategies are "thinking about learning" strategies, that is, they are generic and are used with all different language skills and types of learning tasks (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. So, if we describe metacognitive strategies in terms of listening, we could say that planning would involve deciding which listening (or cognitive) strategies would serve us best in a particular situation. While listening we would monitor our comprehension as well as the effectiveness of the strategies we chose. Finally, we would determine if we had achieved our comprehension goals and decide if we wanted to continue using this particular combination of strategies in similar listening tasks in the future.

Who are strategic listeners?

Strategic listeners are proficient listeners. They are listeners who:

- are aware of their listening processes;
- have a repertoire of listening strategies, and know which work best for them, with which listening tasks;
- use various listening strategies in combination and vary the combinations with the listening task;
- are flexible in their use of strategies and will try a different strategy if the one they originally chose does not work for them;
- use both bottom-up and top-down strategies; and
- plan, monitor, and evaluate before, during, and after listening.

Although less proficient listeners have and use a variety of strategies, they tend to use the wrong strategy for their listening purpose; they don't show flexibility by trying different strategies until one works (Vann and Abraham, 1990). These listeners tend to become distracted, frustrated, and uninterested, and are not successful in monitoring their comprehension. Less proficient listeners also seem to be more dependent on bottom-up decoding of the listening text, to the detriment of processing speed and accuracy of comprehension (Chamot and Küpper, 1989).

How can our students become strategic listeners?

Our goal as language instructors is student autonomy. We want to produce students who, even if they don't have complete control of the grammar or an extensive lexicon, can at least fend for themselves in communicative situations. If this is our goal, we must teach students how to listen. Listening skills can't be acquired just through exposure to language; they need to be explicitly taught and practiced.

Rixon (1981) suggests that proficient listeners (in both first and second language) follow four basic steps to extract meaning from a listening text:

- *They figure out the purpose for listening, predict and anticipate some of what they will hear, and assess their background knowledge of the topic.* In real life we listen for a purpose, and that purpose, together with the context of listening, acts to create expectations of what we are about to hear. Depending on our knowledge, our interest, and our need, we decide to listen more or less attentively. For example, you get up in the morning and turn on the radio to get the weather report. Your purpose is to find out what the weather will be so you can dress accordingly. It is August, you're in Washington, D.C., and the sky is cloudy—based on your background knowledge of the context, you anticipate hot weather and possibly rain.

- *They decide how much of what they're hearing is relevant to the purpose they have already identified, and selectively ignore or attend to parts of the listening input.* This selectivity is crucial, especially at the beginning stages of language learning, as it enables the student to focus on particular items in the input and reduces the amount of information the student has to hold in short-term memory in order to recognize it. To continue with our example, depending on the station to which you are tuned, you will be getting lots of commercials, music, news, and other chatter. Your ability to selectively attend will enable you to tune out much of what you hear while still keeping your "antenna" up for the weather forecast.

- *As they listen, they use top-down and bottom-up strategies flexibly and interactively depending on the purpose, the difficulty of the input, and their background knowledge.* Top-down and bottom-up strategies are not necessarily sequential, but simultaneous and interactive. The text-based identification strategies and the listener-based interpretation strategies interact and blend in the construction of meaning. In the case of our weather report, you will be listening—bottom-up—for certain words or numbers, or even music that will alert you to the coming forecast. The context knowledge we mentioned above will help you interpret the input "from the top down."

- *They check their comprehension while they're listening and when the listening task is over.* Monitoring comprehension is key for all listeners, and critical for beginning listeners who may invest themselves in a totally erroneous interpretation of a text. Monitoring comprehension helps students detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, directing them to use alternative strategies. To round out our example, monitoring will lead you to question your comprehension of a forecast of fifty degrees or of snow. Your alternative strategy will probably be to stay tuned until the weather report is repeated.

As discussed above, research on "the good language learner" provides us with suggestions of effective listening behaviors to model for our students. Additionally, the learning strategy training literature presents us with ideas on how to introduce, practice, and evaluate our students' use of listening strategies. The suggestions listed below are not, for the most part, extra things to do in the classroom, but different ways of perceiving and presenting listening instruction by focusing on the process of listening rather than on its product.

- *Develop awareness of the listening process and of the listening strategies your* *students use in their native language*. Present and discuss (in the first language) the graphic in Figure 1. Ask questions such as the ones posed in the introduction to this module. Get students to think and talk about how they listen. It will probably be the first time they do this.

- *When you work with a listening assignment in class, show students the strategies that work best, considering the purpose and the type of text*. Provide a rationale. Explain why they should use the strategies. Call the strategies by name, e.g., "Let's find the main idea of this passage", or "Paraphrase what Lucinda says". Describe the steps necessary to use the strategies. Model how *you* would use the strategy and allow them to practice with you.

- *Practice the strategies in class, and ask your students to practice them outside of class in their listening assignments*. Review your tape workbook for listening and metacognitive strategies (remember that listening activities and skills are cognitive strategies). Bring them to your students' attention. Encourage them to be conscious of what they're doing while they complete the listening tape assignments.

- *Encourage your students to evaluate their comprehension and their strategy use immediately after completing an assignment*. Build comprehension checks into your in-class assignments and out-of-class listening worksheets. Periodically ask students if specific strategies are working for them and review how and when to use particular strategies. Don't forget the metacognitives.

- *Don't assume that your students will transfer strategy use from one task to another*. Explicitly mention how a particular strategy can be used in a different type of listening task or with another skill. There is a great deal of strategy crossover between reading and listening. Explain how scanning, for example, may be similar and different in each language skill.

Determining Your Goals and Objectives: Roles, Modes, Functions, and Purposes of Listening

For many years listening was misdesignated the "passive" language skill, conceivably because the listening act is, at least outwardly, a quiet activity. Now that we've seen just how complex the listening process is on the "inside," we're going to look at the conditions which affect listening on the outside. The sections that follow will present you with four dimensions which will be key to setting the goals and objectives of your listening program and lessons.

There are many ways to describe the listening act and many conditions in which it occurs. We have already mentioned the importance of the purpose for listening. Listening can also be described according to the role the listener assumes (participant, addressee, audience member, or overhearer), the listening mode (one-way or two-way), and the function of the listening act (interactional or transactional). Listener roles, modes, and functions will be briefly described below.

Listener roles

Rost (1990), defines roles in terms of the degree of active participation by the listener in the discourse. He lists four possible listener roles:

- A listener may be a **participant** in a conversation. This person is spoken to directly and can respond to others involved in the conversation. Role plays or other negotiation of meaning activities will involve students as participants.
- An **addressee** is also spoken to directly, but doesn't have the same range of involvement as the participant. Students may tend to take the role of addressee if at lower levels of proficiency or in a teacher-centered classroom.
- **Audience members** are directly addressed, but are not expected to respond, although they may act upon the information received. Following directions would put a student in the role of audience member.
- An **overhearer** can hear, but is not being addressed and cannot respond. Many listening practice tasks place students in the role of overhearer, where the student's comprehension is assessed through some type of test question.

Modes, functions, and purposes

According to Morley (1991) listening may take place in two different forms: **two-way** exchanges or interactions, or **one-way** communications. The former are exchanges between two or more persons; the latter may consist of overhearing conversations or listening to announcements, the radio, television, a lecture, or a message on voice mail. Two-way communications often serve an **interactional function,** where the main purpose is a social exchange. One-way communications frequently serve a **transactional function** since they involve the transfer or exchange of information. Nevertheless, some two-way conversations are also transactions, e.g., buying an airplane ticket. Interactional exchanges are people-oriented; they may be indirect or vague and very dependent on context. On the other hand, transactional exchanges are message-oriented; their aim is to convey information in a clear and precise manner.

Purposes for listening may range from identifying and assigning meaning to sounds, to gaining information, participating in a social situation, evaluating a message, and listening for entertainment. More specific "real-life" listening purposes would be: recognizing a call of "Fire!"; listening to advice from a doctor or lawyer, or interviewing someone; attending a wedding or other ceremony; critically listening to a political advertisement; or viewing a movie or other theatrical performance.

Is it important for your students to be able to label their listening modes, functions, and purposes? Perhaps not. But it is important that they be made aware of how they must adjust their listening behavior to successfully deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. In other words, to achieve the listening goals and objectives you have set for them.

Matching Your Goals and Objectives:
Evaluating, Adapting, and Developing Listening Materials

Most first through fourth semester (beginning and intermediate) textbook language programs include listening comprehension and pronunciation practice as part of their laboratory tape component. Some textbooks integrate listening practice into classroom instruction with an additional classroom tape; others provide students with their own copies of the classroom tape to complete the exercises at home. Separate laboratory tape components are usually not included with fifth and sixth semester (advanced) language texts, although student tapes of reading selections and dialogues are sometimes found.

As mentioned above, a well-rounded listening program will provide students with a range of practice opportunities. Your responsibility as instructor may be to evaluate the existing listening activities to see if they conform to your program's goals and objectives. It may be that you will have to modify or adapt listening activities to the needs of your program or to the needs of your student population, or you may find that you want to design your own listening activities to supplement those in the textbook or for some other special purpose. The criteria described below will serve as a guide as you evaluate, adapt, or design listening materials for your own class or for your language program.

Construct the listening activity around a contextualized task.

Task-based listening exercises specify the purpose for listening and how the student will respond. Contextualized listening activities approximate real-life tasks and, as in real life, provide the listener with an idea of the type of information to expect and what to do with it in advance of the actual listening. A beginning level task would be locating places on a map or drawing a simple picture. At an intermediate level students could follow a recipe or directions for assembling or fixing something.

Define the activity's instructional goal and type of response.

These are your instructional objectives for the listening activity or exercise. Each activity should have as its goal the improvement of a listening skill. As discussed in the preceding section, the selection of the skill to be practiced will depend on the situation and purpose for listening. In a seminal article, Richards (1983), lists 51 "micro-skills" required for conversational and for academic listening. These range from processing speech at different rates of delivery to recognizing key lexical items related to a topic. These micro-skills could be used as a point of departure in the evaluation or design of a listening program. Lund (1990) proposes a broader set of listening goals (see Table 1 at the end of the text) focused on ways of processing the aural message in one-way listening tasks. Lund also defines nine listener response categories (see Table 2 at the end of the text), that is, what the listener does as a result of the task and in order to demonstrate comprehension. He suggests that the goals and response categories reflect a full range of listening competencies for audio tape, video, and one-way classroom tasks.

In addition to the responses in Table 2, Morley (1991, pp. 92-94) lists the following "communicative outcomes" appropriate to both one- and two-way comprehension activities:

- listening and solving problems, such as working with games or puzzles;
- listening and evaluating information, as when preparing for a debate;
- interactive listening and negotiating meaning through questioning/answering routines; and
- listening for enjoyment, pleasure, and sociability, such as listening to songs, plays, or jokes.

As Morley cautions, a listening activity may have more than one goal or outcome, but care must be exercised that the beginning or intermediate listener not have his or her attention overburdened.

Evaluate your activities in terms of bottom-up/top down processing and of interactional and transactional functions.

Listening tasks can also be categorized in terms of their processing direction (top-down or bottom-up) and of the function they serve (interactional or transactional). In top-down activities, the listener taps into background knowledge to understand the meaning of what is being heard. Background or prior knowledge may be of the topic, of the situation or context, of the type of text, or it may be linguistic knowledge. Background knowledge activates a set of expectations with which to make inferences and predictions of the content of the text. Orientation, main idea comprehension, solving problems, evaluating information, negotiating meaning, and listening for enjoyment particularly draw on the student's background knowledge.

Bottom-up activities are those in which the listener relies on the language in the listening text itself to glean the meaning of what is being heard. These activities tap into the listener's knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Identification and detail comprehension are inherently bottom-up goals and will prescribe bottom-up responses.

As has been mentioned several times before, the purpose of the listening task will determine the response. Conversations (interactional listening) are often indirect and vague but rich in context. Top-down processes seem to predominate as the participants are able to fill out the details using their shared knowledge. On the other hand, transactional listening is informational and more dependent on bottom-up processes. This does not mean that the listener will never attend to detail in a conversation, or that top-down knowledge is not important in more formal listening situations, as in many cases interactional and transactional functions will alternate and the listener will need to adjust for the new purpose.

One word of caution: as you evaluate or design listening tasks keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in the text is an unrealistic expectation to which, under normal circumstances, even native speakers are not held. Those listening exercises which are meant to train, not to test, should be success-oriented and build up the students' confidence in their listening ability.

Check the level of difficulty of the listening text.

How easy or difficult are the listening texts in your lab program or the listening selections you propose to use? You may want to consider the factors listed below as you judge the relative ease or difficulty of a listening text for a particular purpose and a particular group of students.

How is the information organized?

Texts in which the events are presented in natural chronological order, which have an informative title, and which present the information following an obvious organization (main ideas first, details and examples second) are easier to follow.

How familiar are the students with the topic?

Background knowledge can be supplied through pre-listening activities, but misapplication of background knowledge due to cultural differences can create major comprehension difficulties.

Does the text contain redundancy?

At the lower levels of proficiency, listeners may find short, simple messages easier to process, but students with higher proficiency benefit from the natural redundancy of the language. Lack of clear referents may be a greater problem than redundancy.

Does the text involve many individuals and objects? Are they clearly differentiated?

It is easier to understand a text with a doctor and a lawyer than with two lawyers, it is easier if they live in different countries, and it is even easier if they are of the opposite sex. In other words, the more marked the differences, the easier the comprehension.

Does the text offer visual support to aid in the interpretation of what the listeners hear?

Visual aids such as maps, diagrams, or pictures, or the images in a video, help contextualize the listening input and provide clues to meaning.

Does the story line, narrative, or instruction conform to familiar expectations?

We take much for granted as we listen. We automatically assume certain cause and effect relationships without bothering to analyze them. If we hear the shower running we expect a person to be taking the shower, not the character's houseplants!

It is entirely possible to use texts which present a higher level of difficulty if you grade the level of complexity of the listening tasks you design to a level appropriate to the students' proficiency. In this way the task mediates between the text and the listener to help facilitate comprehension. At the same time, a text may be used several times and explored at various levels by designing a variety of tasks, each with different goals or outcomes and responses.

Match the activities to the students' proficiency level.

Regardless of the level of proficiency of the students, listening activities should have interesting and motivating content, be based on good quality of taped or video materials, and be appropriate to the learners' needs. Several authors suggest listening activities suitable for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. For example, Peterson (1991) presents a range of suggestions for bottom-up and for top-down exercises, and for activities which combine both top-down and bottom-up processing. Exercises of each type, as well as profiles of the listener, are provided for each level of proficiency.

Omaggio-Hadley (1993) lists many task types appropriate for building listening proficiency in learners at the novice/intermediate and the advanced/superior levels as defined by the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Some tasks that you can use with first-and second-year students are listening with visuals, filling in graphics and charts, listening for the gist, searching for specific clues to meaning, or distinguishing between formal and informal registers.

Provide students with opportunities to develop and practice listening strategies.

Suggestions for implementing strategy instruction were discussed in an earlier section. To recap: design listening tasks which raise students' awareness of the listening process and of the range of listening strategies available to them; design activities to practice specific strategies; model both metacognitive and cognitive listening strategies and provide guided practice; encourage students to evaluate and monitor their listening comprehension and their strategy use. In Part Two you will find suggestions of activities you can use to practice skimming, scanning, inferencing, and summarizing, and for planning for the listening task and monitoring and evaluating comprehension.

Planning the Listening Lesson: Pre-listening, While-listening, and Post-listening Activities

Now that we have discussed at length the elements that guide well-constructed and varied listening activities, we must turn our attention to how to deliver those activities. We need to organize the exercises and listening tasks into the kind of lessons that will facilitate and guide the students' comprehension and that will prove to be interesting and enjoyable listening experiences.

The "pre-, while-, post-" model described below was initially used for reading instruction and has proved to be equally successful when applied to listening. Each of the listening stages will be described below and suggestions given for activities which best suit each stage. You will see how the activities we have already discussed easily fit into each of these stages and how the other language skills can also be integrated into the listening lesson.

The pre-listening stage

In line with our attempts to make classroom listening experiences as close to real-life listening as possible, pre-listening activities help set the expectations we normally have before we enter into a situation in which listening is required. If we go to the movies we at least know the title of the movie we're going to see and perhaps have read a review or two. If we have flown a few times, we can anticipate the airplane steward's safety instructions as our flight takes off. In the same manner, pre-listening activities prepare the students for what they are going to hear or view.

The activities chosen during pre-listening may serve as preparation for listening in several ways. During pre-listening the teacher may:

- assess students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text;
- provide students with the background knowledge necessary for their comprehension of the listening passage or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess;
- clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage;
- make students aware of the type of text they will be listening to, the role they will play, and the purpose(s) for which they will be listening;
- provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for background reading or class discussion activities.

Pre-listening activities may include:

- looking at pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs;
- reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures;
- reading something relevant;
- constructing semantic webs (a graphic arrangement of concepts or words showing how they are related);
- predicting the content of the listening text;
- going over the directions or instructions for the activity; and
- doing guided practice.

The while-listening stage

While-listening activities relate directly to the text. They are the activities that students are asked to do either during the time they are listening to the passage, video, or teacher narration; or immediately after. You should keep these points in mind when planning while-listening activities:

If students are asked to complete written activities during or immediately after listening they should be given an opportunity to read through the activity prior to listening.

Your students need to devote all their attentional resources to the listening task. Check that they understand the directions (especially if written in the target language) before the activity begins.

Keep writing to a minimum if the activity is to be completed during listening.

Remember that the primary task is comprehension, not production. Select simpler activities for this stage, for example:

- circle an answer, a picture, or an object;
- order items or pictures;
- complete grids;
- follow a route on a map;
- fill in a picture;
- check off items in a list;
- complete cloze exercises.

If the response is to be given after listening (rather than during listening), the task or activity may be more demanding.

The activities you present immediately after listening to a passage or to segments of a passage may be more complex than the ones listed above. Make sure that the responses aren't just memory exercises, but that they reflect comprehension of the listening passage.

Organize your activities so that they guide the listeners through the text.

Include a combination of global activities such as getting the gist, the main idea, the topic, the setting; and selective listening activities which focus on details of content and form.

Use your activities to focus the students' attention on the parts or elements of the text crucial to the comprehension of the whole.

This technique allows you to present longer listening selections. Help students to listen more intensively to content-laden sections by providing activities which focus on detail.

When you use the same text for several purposes, it is better to listen to the same text several times.

Each time students listen with a different purpose. Don't require students to respond to several activities based on one listening opportunity.

Provide activities which encourage students to monitor their comprehension as they listen.

Monitoring doesn't seem to occur spontaneously; students must be trained to check their own comprehension as they listen. If you do a prediction activity, for example, always follow up with another activity to confirm or disconfirm the prediction. Remind students to review what they are gleaning from the passage to see if it makes sense in the context of their world knowledge and what they already know of the topic or events of the passage.

Give immediate feedback whenever possible.

It is particularly important to give immediate feedback when doing a series of activities based on the same text. Encourage students to examine how or why their responses were incorrect.

The post-listening stage

Post-listening activities take place after the text has been heard in its entirety and as many times as needed to accomplish the listening objectives. Post-listening activities serve three general purposes: (1) to check the comprehension of the whole text and react to the text; (2) to evaluate students' listening skills and use of listening strategies; and (3) to extend the knowledge gained from the listening text to other contexts.

At this stage the activities need to be motivating and have a purpose of their own. While they are linked to the listening text, they may not necessarily involve listening, and they may be done outside the class. Post-listening activities:

- may expand on the topic or the language of the text and thus relate only loosely to the original passage;
- could relate to a pre-listening activity;
- may transfer what has been learned to reading, speaking, or writing activities.

Post-listening activities could include some of the response categories listed by Lund (Table 2) such as condensing, extending, or modeling. Role-plays, debates, outside research, creative writing, drawing, and problem-solving are possible post-listening activities. Always keep in mind the students' interest level. One brief post-listening activity may be all that the students' interest may bear.

Using Video Materials

The VCR and television monitor have become as pervasive in the language classroom as the blackboard. Video can enhance listening comprehension by providing learners with contextually rich, high interest, authentic, and culturally appropriate communicative situations. But, "showing a video" will not of itself lead to leaps in proficiency or cultural awareness. Videos are not intrinsically comprehensible to language learners—teachers must design the tasks which render them accessible. Second language video materials fall into two categories: materials which are designed and produced for pedagogical purposes, and authentic materials produced by native speakers for the consumption of fellow native speakers.

In the sections below we will build a rationale for using video for language instruction by describing how video facilitates listening comprehension. We will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of pedagogic and authentic video, the use of video with beginning level students, and some factors to consider when planning video activities.

Why use video for listening practice?

Listening typically occurs in conjunction with visual information. Take an imaginary snapshot of yourself right now, as you are, and then examine the "picture" for clues of what is going on; now add the "audio." Yes! The visual component plays a key role in understanding the aural message.

Video presents the viewer with information conveyed via aural and visual channels. Rather than making competing demands for cognitive resources, each channel seems to contribute to the processing effort in specialized but complementary ways: the visual channel taps into bottom-up processes, focusing on details; and the aural channel taps into top-down processes, drawing upon information, or schemata, stored in memory.

The addition of the visual component seems to be particularly helpful to learners who are not knowledgeable about the information being presented, as the visual input may provide those additional details necessary to elaborate or relate the message to existing knowledge. That is, if one has insufficient prior content or linguistic knowledge, the visual input may provide the information necessary to make the inferences to fill in the gaps in the message.

Second language learners are often exclusively exposed to modified language. Modified language may contain features such as simplified vocabulary, slowed rate of speech, unnatural intonation and rhythm, complete sentences as utterances, little overlap between speakers, or no background noise. No wonder they can't communicate in a "native" setting: these materials do not prepare students for real-life listening tasks.

Practicing listening skills with authentic materials and different types of spoken language allows students to experience language as it functions in the target culture, fosters students' confidence in their listening skills, and may help reduce their anxieties about interacting with native speakers. Authentic video segments can capture the language in all of its linguistic and sociocultural complexity, something that we cannot replicate in the classroom in any other way.

Are authentic videos too much for beginning students?

The answer to this question depends on the video segments you have in mind and the listening tasks the students will complete. If both video and listening task are carefully selected, keeping in mind the instructional objectives of the lesson and the proficiency level and the interests of your students, then the answer is: no, it is not too much for beginning students.

Rubin (1995) mentions that video, language/textual, and learner characteristics must be factored into the selection of a video segment. The following factors must be considered:

- the amount of contextual support—physical settings or props, action, and the interaction between participants should provide clues to meaning;
- a segment with a story line adds predictability and a common theme, making it easier to predict and test predictions;
- sequences which have a continuous story line should have closure;
- the quality of the video and audio should be clear;
- the speech delivery (e.g., strong accents, rapid speech), density of language (e.g., newscasts vs. dramas), the presence of cognates or recognizable places or persons, and the amount of background knowledge required should be examined.

Let us say that you are interested in showing a particular video, it fits very well with the content you are covering in class, but after examining it in light of the above factors it comes up short. The segment is a newscast and a bit more dense than you think your students can handle; it also has a series of "talking heads" in addition to the images. Do you give up on the video? Consider what you want your students to get from the segment: can you design listening tasks which will facilitate your objectives?

We can develop listening materials by manipulating two variables: the input (the language that the learner hears) or the tasks we set for the learner. We can design tasks which render authentic videotexts accessible to students, at any level, by making the listening task simpler, thus artificially reducing the level of comprehension difficulty. Understanding is then defined by the design and focus of the task and not by the text. So, you don't have to give up on the video if there is a pedagogically sound reason for using it. Instead, you prepare your students well in the pre-listening stage and provide them with listening tasks that will enable them to successfully achieve their purpose for listening and your instructional objectives.

Other factors to consider when teaching with video

Video instructional materials fulfill the role of mediator between the viewer and the videotext.

The listening tasks must supply the missing links and provide the necessary assistance for negotiation of meaning.

Build from the general or from the particular.

Listening tasks can lead students from the overall idea to the details (from getting the gist to detail comprehension), or direct them to small pieces of new information which will help them construct meaning (listening for known vocabulary and making predictions on the basis of that vocabulary).

Treat the material in multiple cycles.

Go through the same materials several times, each time guided by specific tasks, increasing the depth and range of understanding with each cycle. You will be able to work with longer videotexts if you break them up into smaller segments and work each segment individually, creating a "chain" of comprehension.

The level of comprehension achieved should be dependent on the instructional goals.

These goals, in turn, should be dependent on the students' level of proficiency.

Students should not expect to understand every word, but learn to accept global comprehension.

Make sure that students understand that you will set the standard of comprehension for the segment. Practice first with getting the gist of short segments or parts of segments. Raise the standard as the students' proficiency increases.

Give students practice in "reading" environmental clues which are not directly part of the verbal message.

Comprehension is aided by extralinguistic clues such as setting, what people are wearing, or background noises, and by paralinguistic clues such as gestures, intonation, or facial expressions.

PART TWO

One-way Listening

Working with textbook tape programs and video materials

The quality of textbook tape programs varies widely. Audiocassette programs are accompanied by a lab manual which is almost always packaged with the student workbook. Most often the two are separated by sections, although some workbooks integrate the listening exercises with the writing exercises by chapter. The listening component usually includes pronunciation practice, especially at the beginning levels. Recently, more textbooks are integrating listening exercises into the lessons in the student text, offering a student tape to complete listening assignments at home.

Listening selections include a range of materials, although typically one finds scripted and semi-scripted materials with some authentic selections. Semi-scripted listening materials are those where the persons on tape improvise around a given topic and preset parameters, in this way more closely approaching authentic conversation. A variety of responses are also called for, the most frequent responses being selecting the correct picture, word, or phrase; true/false; filling in grids; and cloze (fill-in) exercises.

The greatest challenges with textbook tape programs are integrating the listening experiences into the classroom instruction and keeping up student interest and motivation. These challenges partially arise from the fact that most textbook listening programs emphasize product (right or wrong answer) over process (how to get meaning from the selection), as well as from the fact that the listening activities are usually carried out as an add-on, away from the classroom.

The suggestions given in the "Matching Your Goals and Objectives" and the "Planning the Listening Lesson" sections can serve as starting points both to evaluate and adapt the exercises in your listening programs. You can begin by raising your students' awareness of the importance of listening practice to their language learning. At the beginning of the course you can orient students to the tape program by completing the exercises in class and discussing the different strategies they use to answer the questions. It is a good idea to periodically complete some of the lab exercises in class to maintain the link to the regular instructional program and to check on the effectiveness of the exercises themselves.

Many textbook programs offer a videotape with a variety of segments as ancillary materials. Some also offer accompanying viewing materials, exercises to support the viewing of the video. As with the audio tape programs, the quality of these videos and materials vary; the suggestions given here for dealing with cassette tape programs apply to videotape programs as well.

Activities for teaching and practicing listening strategies

The activities listed below are organized according to the type of cognitive strategy they model. Remember that **cognitive strategies** are ways of dealing with the listening input. Most of these activities can be used with video as well as with other types of listening materials. Singly or in combination, these activities promote the following listening behaviors: prediction and anticipation of the content, hypothesis formation, guessing and filling in gaps, selecting relevant and non-relevant information, learning to tolerate less than word by word comprehension, and global listening to get the meaning of the message.

Skimming—listening for the gist or main idea:

- give or select a title;
- select the main idea—various levels of difficulty: select a picture, choose a phrase (multiple choice), answer true/false, or write the main idea.

Scanning—listening/viewing for specific details:

- scan for keywords given in advance;
- write or tick off a list of items—categories may be content related or grammar related;
- listen/view a segment, and stop the tape/speaker when the answer to a previously posed question or a particular word or expression is heard;
- question and answer—scan a segment for specific information; response type may be at various levels of difficulty ranging from circling a picture to writing the answer;
- visual scan—scan for specific extralinguistic information in the setting or paralinguistic details such as gestures or body language in a silent (volume turned off) clip.

Inferencing—using the linguistic and visual information in the text to guess at the meaning of what is heard, to predict outcomes, or to fill in missing information:

- (video) preview a segment by fast forwarding and playing short clips without sound; make predictions based on the preview;
- gaps in dialogue—listen to two or three lines of dialogue and guess the next line; or assume a speaker's part and produce his/her lines;
- (video) watch a silent clip and make inferences based on extralinguistic and paralinguistic information;
- predict the content of the listening text based on a title;
- (video) watch a silent clip and predict the dialogue (may be done as role play);
- for sequential viewing of texts with a story line—predict what will happen in the next segment and give reasons on which the predictions are based; after viewing the segment, check both the prediction and the supporting reasons.

Summarizing—making a condensed version of the listening text or of parts of the text:

- paraphrase a dialogue;
- choose the best summary (response format will dictate level of difficulty—see skimming);
- agree or disagree with a list of summary statements; correct the statements;

- give lead sentences and summarize the text by parts, filling in the details which describe the lead sentence (can be done in narrative or outline form);
- create outline;
- (short segment/passage) list as many words heard/recalled as possible; use those words to summarize the segment/passage;
- order exact lines of dialogue;
- order paraphrases of lines of dialogue;
- (texts with story line) write plot summaries focusing in turn on each character in a story.

Present these cognitive strategies in combination when you design your listening activities, as they will more closely reflect the way we naturally listen, e.g., looking at a title, making a prediction, and scanning for details to confirm the prediction. Listening tasks should also integrate the three **metacognitive strategies** discussed earlier.

Planning for the listening task:
- set a purpose or decide in advance what to listen for;
- decide if more linguistic knowledge or background knowledge of the topic is needed (e.g., review the imperative before listening to a recipe);
- determine whether to enter the text from the top-down (attend to the overall meaning) or from the bottom-up (focus on the words and phrases).

Monitoring comprehension:
- verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses;
- decide what is and is not important to understand;
- listen/view again to check comprehension;
- ask for help.

Evaluating comprehension and strategy use:
- evaluate comprehension in a particular task;
- evaluate overall progress in listening and in particular types of listening tasks;
- decide if the strategies used were appropriate for the purpose and for the task;
- modify strategies if necessary.

A viewing guide

Figure 2 (at the end of the text) shows a possible plan for integrating cognitive and metacognitive strategies for the viewing of video. This is a generic outline and can be used as a "road map" for in- class or out-of-class viewing assignments. It is suggested that you model and practice this process in class at least once before asking students to use it for independent viewing. Note that you may use it with videos which have worksheets as well as with those which have no accompanying materials. If the latter is the case, the students will, in effect, create their own worksheet as they work through the video.

Two-way Listening in the Classroom: Teacher and Peer Interaction

While, for practical reasons, most of the listening activities we do in the classroom are one-way activities where students fulfill the roles of overhearers or audience members, we must not forget that the greater part of real-world listening occurs in the context of conversation, with the speaker and listener exchanging roles as they negotiate meaning. The skills necessary for negotiating meaning in interactive two-way communication are not within the scope of this module, yet three specific skills must be mentioned in the context of two-way listening instruction. These skills are of primary importance to foreign language listeners/speakers if they are to hold a successful conversation:

- they must be able to identify the topic of the conversation, especially in ambiguous or vague messages;
- they must be able to make predictions as to the direction the conversation will take;
- they must be able to recognize when there is a comprehension problem and signal when they don't have enough information to make a response, by asking for additional information or clarification.

Morley (1991) suggests that students be given the opportunity to practice these skills in small group activities where a "speaker" presents a short five-minute story, demonstration, or description. The rest of the group act as "listeners" whose responsibility it is to negotiate meaning by asking different types of questions. She suggests questions such as: "Could you repeat the last thing you said?" (repetition), "I don't understand what you mean by... Could you explain it again?" (paraphrase), "Do you mean that..." (clarification), "Please tell us more about..." (elaboration), "How does that relate to..." (extension), and "Why did you say..." (challenge). Students tend to limit themselves to repetition-type requests and thus should be given a range of questions to stimulate depth and variety.

Summary

Listening is not just hearing and decoding words and phrases. Listening is a very active process of constructing meaning from the text and from the listener's background knowledge and knowledge of the language. Listening comprehension involves hearing, paying attention, understanding, and remembering. These processes are not linear; they operate interactively.

Listening strategies are "hands-on" listening skills which relate directly to the passage or listening text. Some listening strategies are cognitive. Comprehension can be initiated from the top-down (when they depend on the listener's prior knowledge, like inferencing) or from the bottom-up (when comprehension begins with the language in the listening text, like scanning for details).

Metacognitive listening strategies are generic types of strategies which are used with all kinds of tasks and skills. They help us plan, monitor, and evaluate our learning. Proficient listeners are aware of their listening processes and of the strategies they use. They know many different strategies and know which to use depending on their purpose for listening. We can teach students to be effective listeners by modeling strategic listening behaviors.

The listener's role (as participant, addressee, audience member, or overhearer), the listening mode (one-way or two-way), the function of the communication (interactional or transactional), and the purpose of the listening task must be taken into consideration when setting the goals and objectives of the listening program.

These criteria will help you evaluate, adapt, or design listening tasks: contextualize the task; specify the goal and the response; include bottom-up, top-down, interactional, and transactional activities; match the activities to the students' proficiency level; make too-difficult texts usable by adjusting the difficulty of the task; and model and practice listening strategies.

Prepare your students for the listening task with pre-listening activities and follow up the while-listening exercises with post-listening comprehension, evaluation, or extension activities.

Authentic video contextualizes language and offers a cultural dimension difficult to duplicate in the classroom. Reduce the level of difficulty of a video by designing level-appropriate tasks, and by going through the video several times, each time with a different purpose. Teach your students not to hang on every word by giving them global listening tasks and by encouraging them to rely more on the visual input.

Integrate listening practice with practice in other skills, especially with speaking practice. Remember that listening is the better half of speaking.

Don't accept your textbook listening program uncritically; evaluate the activities and modify them or supplement them when they don't fit your listening goals and objectives.

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Suggested Additional Reading

Mendelsohn, D. J. and Rubin, J. (1995). *A guide for the teaching of second language listening*. San Diego, CA: Dominie Press.

This volume is directed at teachers-in-training. The chapters combine theory and practice in a variety of topics, including: assessment, pronunciation practice, listening strategies, teaching with video, interactive listening strategies, and academic listening.

Morley, J. (1991). Listening comprehension in second/foreign language instruction. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 81-106). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

An excellent overview of listening as a skill and of listening comprehension instruction. Morley presents principles for developing listening comprehension activities and materials, and techniques and activities for interactional and transactional listening.

Nunan, D. and Miller, L. (Eds.). (1995). *New ways in teaching listening*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, Inc.

A collection of practical ideas for teaching listening. The activities are presented under these categories: Part I, Developing cognitive strategies—listening for the main idea, listening for details, and predicting; Part II, Developing listening with other skills—listening and speaking, listening and pronunciation, and listening and vocabulary; Part III, Listening to authentic material; and Part IV, Using technology.

Peterson, P. W. (1991). A synthesis of methods for interactive listening. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 106-122). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Peterson presents a developmental view of listening skills. She profiles beginning, intermediate and advanced level students and provides suggestions for bottom-up, top-down, and interactive activities for each level.

Underwood, M. (1989). *Teaching listening*. Longman Group, Ltd.

The author approaches listening instruction from a pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening perspective. Background information on the teacher's role in setting objectives for listening lessons and in the preparation of listening materials is presented. The sample listening activities are classified according to the suggested pre-/while-/post- stages.

The Author

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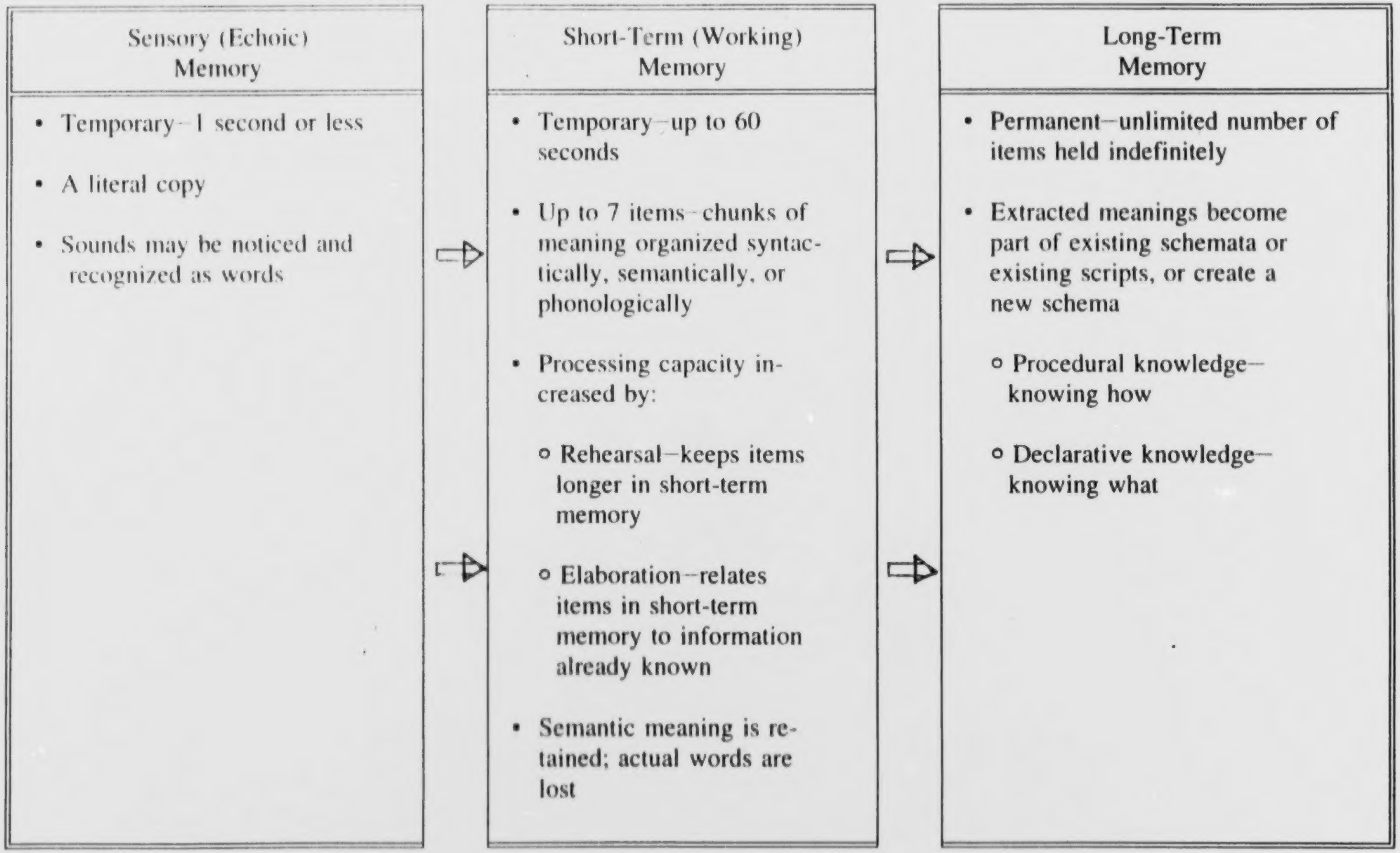
Figure 1 Information-Processing Model of Listening Comprehension



Sensory (Echoic) Memory

- Temporary—1 second or less
- A literal copy
- Sounds may be noticed and recognized as words

Short-Term (Working) Memory

- Temporary—up to 60 seconds
- Up to 7 items—chunks of meaning organized syntactically, semantically, or phonologically
- Processing capacity increased by:
  - Rehearsal—keeps items longer in short-term memory
  - Elaboration—relates items in short-term memory to information already known
- Semantic meaning is retained; actual words are lost

Long-Term Memory

- Permanent—unlimited number of items held indefinitely
- Extracted meanings become part of existing schemata or existing scripts, or create a new schema
  - Procedural knowledge—knowing how
  - Declarative knowledge—knowing what

Table 1 Goals for Listening Comprehension

Identification	recognizing or discriminating specific aspects of the message, e.g., sounds, categories of words, morphological distinctions
Orientation	determining the important facts about a text, e.g., topic, text type, setting
Main idea comprehension	identifying the higher-order ideas
Detail comprehension	identifying supporting details
Full comprehension	understanding both main ideas and details
Replication	reproducing the message orally or in written form

Table 2 Listener Response Categories

Doing	a physical response	following directions, such as in Total Physical Response (TPR)
Choosing	among several options	selecting, matching, ordering
Transferring	information from the aural form to another modality	filling in a graph, tracing a route
Answering	questions about specific information in the text	open-ended, short-answer, or multiple choice questions
Condensing	synthesizing the information	outlining, taking notes, captioning pictures
Extending	going beyond the text	creating an ending, changing the text
Duplicating	the product of replication	repetition, dictation, transcription
Modeling	imitating the features of the text or the text itself	role play, telling a story
Conversing	an interaction with the text	filling in a taped dialogue, interactive video programs

Figure 2 Strategies for Viewing

I. Plan for your viewing.
- ◆ If you have a vocabulary list:
  1. Write the equivalents of the words you know.
  2. Return to the list after you have viewed with sound and review the list. Has the context helped you guess the meaning of other words? Confirmed the words you knew?
- ◆ If you don't have a vocabulary list:
  1. Note the title and view without sound (if a short segment), or preview with the Fast Forward button.
  2. Write your own vocabulary list and look up the meanings.

II. Preview the segment.
- ◆ View the entire segment without sound (if it is short) or preview it with the Fast Forward button.
  1. What kind of program is it? news? documentary? interview? game show? comedy? drama?
  2. What do you think is going on?
- ◆ View the entire segment with sound (if it is short) or preview it by alternately fast forwarding, playing it for few seconds in real time, and fast forwarding again.
- ◆ Make a list of predictions about the segment.
- ◆ Decide how to break down the segment for more intensive viewing.
- ◆ Go over your worksheet if you have one.

III. View intensively by sections using the Fast Forward and Rewind buttons.
- ◆ For each section:
  1. What do you learn from the images?
  2. Jot down key words you understood.
  3. Monitor your comprehension: Check—do the words/images support each other?
  4. If you have a worksheet, answer the questions pertaining to the section.
  5. If you don't have a worksheet, write a short summary of the section. What was it about?
  6. Continue to the next section.

IV. Monitor your comprehension.
- ◆ Within the section (see III.3 above).
- ◆ Overall comprehension:
  1. Does it fit with your initial ideas/predictions?
  2. Does your summary (or your answers) for each section make sense in the context of the other sections?

V. Evaluate your viewing comprehension progress.

Reading in the Beginning and Intermediate College Foreign Language Class

Heidi Byrnes
Georgetown University

one of a series of modules for the

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Introduction and Background on Reading in Foreign Language Instruction 2

Considerations for a New Second Language Reading Pedagogy 6

Approaching a Text 10

Instructional Aspects of Second Language Reading: Learning to Read—Reading to Learn 19

Criteria for the Selection of Texts 26

Ascertaining Students' Reading Interests 29

Concluding Comments 31

References and Suggested Additional Reading 33

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[1] This unit takes the theoretical approach detailed in *Reading for Meaning* (Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes, 1991). The tables (with the exception of Tables 1, 9, and 11) are based on materials from that publication, particularly pp. 24, 77-78, 137-139, 160-162, and 206-207. Table 9 reflects Kramsch's recommendations in "Literary Texts in the Classroom" (1985). Table 11 presents workshop materials created by June K. Phillips (1985).

Introduction and Background on Reading in Foreign Language Instruction

Among the four major forms of language use (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) reading has over the years had a steady presence in American collegiate second/foreign learning and teaching. Learning a second language, even a modern foreign language and not only the "dead" classical languages, has not so much been seen as a means for interacting directly with the users of the other language but as a way to access, through the medium of the language, certain "goods" which individuals and entire cultures had produced over time and which were deemed to be educationally valuable. Even when learners' speaking ability was the instructional entrée, the long-term goal was for students to be able to access, analyze, and interpret texts in the second language, most specifically literary texts.

Today we may consider such a focus narrow and outdated, too bookish and elitist, and remote from "real" and "normal" use of language, which we generally equate with interactive speaking. However, reading should not merely be allowed to maintain its traditional presence; rather, it should play an explicit and encompassing role in the communicative classroom. This is so since there is good evidence that, far from being contradictory to such an orientation, reading in fact significantly enhances the likelihood that adult learners will be able to attain the complex goals of communicative instruction: useable levels of language *in all modalities*.

Arguments in favor of incorporating reading

As we spell out this explicit role for reading in the communicative class it is appropriate to recall long-standing arguments in favor of reading, many of which continue to be valid.

- Few second language learners are likely to use their abilities in the second language by interacting directly with speakers of other languages. By comparison, learners may well encounter second language texts, in their personal as well as their professional lives, a scenario that justifies an emphasis on written language and specifically reading.

- In the American educational system foreign languages are generally not taught for long sequences, neither at the high school nor at the college level. Speaking a foreign language competently requires a well articulated, multiyear curriculum. By contrast, reading ability can be brought to usable and useful levels in a considerably shorter period of time.

- Having acquired basic reading strategies, second language learners can further develop their reading ability on their own, without an instructor, and on their own time—all they need to do is read! This common-sense statement is not nearly as pedagogically unenlightened as it might first appear: in fact, it accords with some of the best research, not to mention experiential evidence, we have with regard to reading.

- In contrast with the fragility of speaking, reading ability is considerably more robust. Once a certain facility has been attained, it can be recovered relatively easily, a strong justification for investing time in the teaching of reading.
- Finally, a focus on texts, particularly literary texts, is in the best tradition of what Western societies consider to be definitional for the educated person. Literate societies critically depend on and reward those who are able to access the knowledge and wisdom of the culture, gaining from the past, and carrying it forward in light of their own experiences.

Assumptions about the nature of reading and their reflection in classroom practices

Despite these strong arguments in favor of reading, the profession has yet to develop a coherent and comprehensive pedagogy of second language reading. It did not do so at a time when literature courses dominated the upper-level curriculum, and probably could not do so in the fifties and sixties during the heyday of audiolingualism with its overwhelming interest in speaking. Today, when a communicative or proficiency orientation attempts to regain a balance among the modalities, interest in reading is again on the rise. Many second language textbooks now include reading selections, with nearly ubiquitous previewing, skimming, and scanning exercises as pedagogical staples. However well intentioned these practices may be, they can be quite narrowly conceived, at times becoming prescriptive "techniques" and routines that remain at the surface level. This is so since key assumptions about reading that are increasingly being questioned in research have yet to be dislodged from our classroom practice. Among these are:

(1) second language reading does not differ in critical ways from first language reading;
(2) second language reading ability, in its most important qualities, comes about through transfer, in some unspecified fashion, from the first to the second language;
(3) learners' limitations in second language reading can be attended to by reviewing the basic building blocks of the form side of language, in terms of morphology and syntax and by learning new vocabulary.

In the meantime, both second language teachers and readers have devised elaborate coping strategies for dealing with complex and unfamiliar grammatical constructions or vocabulary: they use a range of support materials (e.g., grammar reviews, textbooks, study guides, English translations, and dictionaries of various quality); they assign and read originally short, shortened, or edited texts (i.e., versions that were "cleaned-up" to account for the multiple limitations of the second language learner), rather than long and authentic texts; they work with glossaries and interlinear translations; and, ultimately, find refuge in the highly predictable routine of questions at the end of a text, though these rarely get at its deeper meanings. More importantly, in the absence of serious challenges to the above

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beliefs, reading is relegated to both luxury and simple tool status within the larger context of second language acquisition, as amply demonstrated by the following positions.

Reading is a support skill for other instructional concerns or goals.

Instead of being valued on its own merits, reading is practiced as a way of supporting a wide range of goals. Among these are:

- *Understanding the other culture.* Enhancing students' cultural understanding occurs primarily through literary texts, which are seen as the best written embodiment of the other culture.

- *Accessing information in a variety of disciplines or topical areas.* Information in support of academic fields (general education and the disciplines) and the work world (professional or pre-professional preparation) is central. Neither second language acquisition in the comprehensive sense nor the development of second language reading abilities are of concern.

- *Reviewing all kinds of linguistic material.* In this use of reading, second language learning seems very much in the forefront. However, in reality "reading" pertains primarily to previously introduced linguistic materials, written or oral, authentic or instructional, or is essentially supplemental. The fact that readings typically occur at the end of an instructional unit shows this optional status for the activity of reading.

- *Improving pronunciation.* A strong concern for appropriate phonetic habits for second language learners takes reading as a way to improve students' pronunciation. Reading out loud, often sentence by sentence by different students, focuses on precise pronunciation of individual words, even individual sounds. Recommendations that reading be delayed or involve only thoroughly familiar, even well "mastered" materials, are the extreme case of this approach. Text comprehension is quite a secondary matter.

- *Acquiring vocabulary.* Though reading has always been assumed to enhance vocabulary acquisition, that connection is only vaguely understood and, in a way, disbelieved, as shown by the kinds of glossaries and vocabulary lists occurring before the text and our ways of subsequently assessing vocabulary gains.

In terms of learner cognitive engagement, second language reading is a passive skill.

Second language pedagogy has traditionally given prominence to the form inventory of language (grammar and vocabulary) and to an additive, linear approach to learning it. Higher performance is "more" and "better" of what learners have already "mastered;" little consideration is given to second language acquisition research findings that learners construct and reconstruct their own interlanguage systems as they acquire the second language. Text comprehension is therefore simply the sum of comprehending the individual, separate component parts of a text with their presumed unequivocal and fixed meanings. What we call bottom-up processing of linguistic material is the reading strategy of choice, irrespective of second language proficiency and second language reading ability—and irrespective of whether that way of reading arrives at something that actually makes sense!

Fluent second language reading is a natural by-product of fluent speaking.

Despite elaborated knowledge about characteristics of oral and written language, including quite specifically literary language, second language reading pedagogy often approaches texts as though they were the written version of spoken language and are processed like spoken language. Since most second language instruction focuses on speaking, not teaching second language reading would make sense only if oral language processing directly transfers to written language processing or the two are essentially identical, both highly dubious assumptions.

Reading ability becomes a concern only at the advanced levels.

Though readings are incorporated in the first two years of language classes, reading is not really a concern for teachers and learners until the so-called content courses at the upper levels. At that point second language curricula dramatically elevate the importance of reading, making it *the* skill advanced learners must have acquired, to a particularly high level and largely on their own.

In sum, while foreign language instruction has had a general commitment to reading as an important goal of second language learning, it has not developed an explicit and encompassing second language reading pedagogy. However, current discussions allow us to be hopeful: remaining lacunae notwithstanding, extensive theorizing has already been done, we can refer to a broad research base, and in some areas our classroom practice has advanced sufficiently to allow the foreign language profession to put forward a range of proposals for a pedagogy of second language reading.

Not surprisingly, such a new pedagogy also requires adjusting our goals for second language reading. Rather than expecting students to become fluent second language readers and to do this on their own, our goal is both more realistic and more demanding: we will support them in beginning the long journey toward acquiring multiple literacies, in various languages and within various discourse environments, for use at home and abroad.

To reach that goal, second language teachers must possess a good understanding of current issues in second language reading pedagogy and must have available to them a sufficient number of specific suggestions which enable them to gradually incorporate sensible innovations into their second language reading practices. This unit hopes to provide both resources, so that teachers can take the critical step of adjusting their pedagogy in light of their own students, their particular teaching environments, and special aspects of their programs.

Considerations for a New Second Language Reading Pedagogy

The proposed new pedagogy for second language reading builds on a number of important developments over roughly the last twenty years. The developments pertain to our understanding of language, of language learning, particularly instructed second language learning, and of both first and second language reading.

Foundational considerations

An expanded theoretical debate about second language learning, particularly instructed second language acquisition

Collegiate second language instruction has benefitted particularly from a differentiated investigation of the learning characteristics of adults. No longer are these discussed primarily as limitations, arrived at by contrasting adult learners with child naturalistic or instructed second language learning. Instead, adult learners are also being studied in terms of important efficiencies they can bring to second language learning that allow them to be particularly successful at certain learning tasks, characteristics that should reshape instruction, with respect to goals and approaches.

A dramatic change in our understanding of human learning

Scholarship in learning now favors a cognitivist constructivist stance over a stimulus-response paradigm; this makes learners active participants in learning rather than passive respondents. Consciousness, noticing, attention, and creation become critical aspects, as contrasted with subliminal perception or rote replication. Also, learners are not isolated cognitive entities but live in a sociocultural context (i.e., the second language classroom) that critically shapes their learning.

A reconsideration of second language learning which frees it from the dominance of form

Language teaching and learning have largely been guided by a primacy of the form side of language and the demand for its accurate mastery by learners. Whether they are referred to as "grammar" or "vocabulary" or simply "accuracy," formal considerations are, indeed, important. However, it is increasingly clear that the goals of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of expression (i.e., communicative competence) are more likely to be attained if functions (meaning) and form are explicitly related to each other. Indeed, language seems learnable only when that function-form relationship is supported by a context of interaction.

Impact on the conceptualization of second language reading

These considerations have major consequences for second language reading in a classroom setting, particularly with regard to the relationship of second language proficiency to background knowledge, the use of authentic texts, and our notion of the act of reading itself.

Second language proficiency and background knowledge

Reading can shed its long-standing preoccupation with second language proficiency and can explore the importance of first language reading ability, generally referred to as background knowledge, for second language reading comprehension. Rather than dismissing the use of authentic texts for meaningful reading in the beginning stages of second language learning, we can ask:

> How first-language literate does a second language reader have to be to make the second language knowledge work?
>
> and
>
> How much second language knowledge does a second language reader have to have in order to make the first language literacy knowledge work?

Answers are sought in three broad areas: text topic knowledge, knowledge of text type, and knowledge about the target language culture.

Text topic knowledge. Not surprisingly we find that the richer readers' topical knowledge of a text selection the less they need to draw on their second language formal knowledge. Although this compensatory function of topic knowledge has undeniable limitations, its opportunities deserve wise exploration in reading pedagogy, particularly in beginning language instruction.

For advanced learners, too, topic knowledge is of critical importance. Since subject matter knowledge generally arises from professional and academic interests, their second language reading can accomplish both goals: enhancing their topical knowledge beyond the information available in the first language and expanding their second language abilities. Given the increasing professionalization of American undergraduate education and our desire to draw more second language learners into our classrooms, it would be difficult to imagine a more powerful combination for motivating continued second language study.

Knowledge of text type. An elaborated knowledge of diverse textual conventions, exemplified in genres (e.g., narration of an event, instructions, essayistic argumentation, news reporting, short story) characterizes the literate user of a language. Such textual schemata allow readers to approach a text in a holistic fashion with what we call top-down processing strategies that are instantiated through bottom-up strategies. Reading is then not a *decoding* of fixed meanings that are presumed to reside in the various words and grammatical constructions of a text. Instead, it is the reader *encoding* meanings into forms on the basis of already existing expectations of what the text is likely to say, based on his or her global assessment of the nature of that text. From the standpoint of language processing, this is a highly efficient way of dealing with incoming data, essentially a matching of meaning-form expectations—and the more developed these are the better—with the actual text, as compared with creating meaning *de novo*.

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Knowledge of the target language culture. Like topic and text organizational knowledge, knowledge of the target language culture can compensate for limited formal knowledge. While topic knowledge is likely to be most useful for addressing vocabulary shortcomings, and text organizational schemata are particularly suited to guiding readers toward the intended structure and thrust of an argument, knowledge of the target language culture leads to consideration of motivations, implications, inferences, and significance of actions and events.

Use of authentic texts

In light of the previous considerations, a pedagogy of reading can now be advocated that does *not* defer or restrict reading of authentic texts to upper levels of instruction, when learners are presumed to have sufficiently high knowledge of the form inventory. Instead, with appropriate caution, reading can be incorporated with great success and to great advantage right from the beginning of second language teaching and learning.

Reading as a process

Perhaps the most succinct way of stating the nature of second language reading is to characterize it in terms of the *process of reading* rather than in terms of the *product of reading*, text comprehension. Table 1 lists frequently used descriptors for this understanding of reading.

Table 1 Reading Is . . .

An interactive process between the reader and the text

A creative process that balances top-down and bottom-up strategies

Assigning meaning to letters, words, phrases, paragraphs, entire texts—*though not necessarily in that order*—not a matter of "extracting sound" from print

Based on both visual and non-visual information

A psycholinguistic guessing game

The reduction of uncertainty

A problem-solving behavior

A highly individualistic activity

A developing model for the second language reading process

In their totality the above points result in a general model of second language reading as an interactive process between so-called top-down, holistic, and schema-driven processing, and bottom-up, form-driven processing. Both can be further described as text-based or reader-based. Table 2 summarizes these understandings in terms of "encoding tasks" (tasks

1-5) that confirm expectations of major meaning patterns, and "decoding tasks" (tasks 6-8), which confirm these expectations at the level of words, phrases, and individual sentences. Both kinds of processing critically depend on readers creatively constructing meaning on the basis of the text, rather than "acquiring" pre-existing meanings.

Table 2 Reading as an Interactive Process

Top-down factors → → → Calling for encoding processes

Bottom-up factors → → → Calling for decoding processes

Top-down factors: Reader

1. Reader background (knowledge of text subject)
2. Reader perspective (knowledge of major text organizations/schemata; reading strategies)

Top-down factors: Text

3. Text schema (macropropositions → "main ideas")
4. Text structure (rhetorical organization)
5. Episodic sequence (mid-level structure)

Bottom-up factors: Text and reader

6. Illustrative detail (micropropositions)
7. Language features of the text (vocabulary, syntax, semantics)
8. Language proficiency of the reader (overall performance capability with regard to issues under point 7)

Linking second language reading and larger educational issues

Beyond its importance for articulating a comprehensive approach to second language reading, the above model has implications for the positioning of foreign language instruction in higher education, but particularly for introductory and intermediate courses. The model recognizes the critical importance of learners' first language, specifically first language literacy, a conceptualization which allows second language reading pedagogy to introduce learners right from the beginning of language teaching to second language texts. As a consequence reading, and by implication all of second language instruction, is linked to the larger world of ideas that is at the heart of the academy.

That connection enables us to address a problem that has consistently besieged second language teaching and learning in American higher education: its traditional isolation from general education issues and consequent struggle with asserting an intellectual presence for its work. By vitally contributing to that central concern in general education (e.g., students' ability to work with texts, in analysis and synthesis, in reading and writing), a new second language reading pedagogy bolsters the academic merit of all foreign language instruction on college campuses.

Approaching a Text

Just what might an understanding of reading as an interactive process mean as teachers and learners approach a text? We can differentiate two major phases, a comprehension phase and a production phase. Table 3 provides a first overview of the process; Tables 4 A and B indicate the kinds of tasks learners will perform; Table 5 is an extended version which gives explicit pedagogical recommendations; Table 6 presents the information in a form that can be made available to students. Other variants, each with a slightly different focus, are provided in Tables 7 and 8.

General considerations

The following understandings frame the proposed approach to second language reading:

- Teachers' and learners' reading behaviors in the classroom are guided through six stages that progress from comprehension to production; the word and phrase level links the two.

- Comprehension moves from global to specific aspects. Just how much specificity in comprehension is required or desired is a pedagogical decision on the part of the teacher. For example, it may well be sufficient to ascertain that students have grasped the major episodes of a narrative rather than every detail.

  The need for sound pedagogical decision-making with regard to levels of specificity applies particularly at the word level, traditionally an area of heavy focus. Whether an individual word needs to be "known/understood" depends on many factors, e.g., significance for the text's topic, importance for learners' meaning creation at a certain point of the text, frequency of the word, learners' proficiency level, subsequent work with the text.

- Production moves in the opposite direction, from word and phrase-level via the sentence-level to the discourse level. Given that production is significantly more demanding of the second language learner, it progresses from less to more complex structures in terms of lexicon and grammar. However, no matter what the level, students work with all language features (from individual words and phrases to complex sentences and paragraphs) *on the basis of their role and place within the larger meaning of the text*, an understanding that has been carefully developed in the three previous comprehension stages. By contrast, traditional reading comprehension tasks often begin by asking students to give the "meaning" of individual words or to explicate the "meaning" of an entire text, in terms of its implications, both highly complex, if not outright "non-doable" tasks from both the linguistic and the content side.

- All language classes comprise students with very different backgrounds and language profiles. As students' background knowledge changes with the text topic, they may well show different reading comprehension abilities. This is particularly true on the beginning level, where the impact of background knowledge is most noticeable.

  Along with different comprehension abilities, learners have different speaking abilities. This approach allows *all* learners to participate, those who still function at the word, phrase, and simple sentence level and those who are quite capable of producing complex sentences and entire oral paragraphs.

- This reading pedagogy continuously links reader- and text-based strategies. This ensures that second language readers continuously monitor their own expectations (e.g., those based on background, convictions, knowledge lacunae) against the kinds of inferences the text permits or justifies, in terms of the (cultural) assumptions within which it is embedded—and make appropriate adjustments once they detect discrepancies.

- With different text topics and at different stages of the second language learning process, the processing burden shifts between top-down and bottom-up factors, depending on what abilities the reader brings to the task.

- While language proficiency must always be present for comprehension to occur, it is no guarantee of comprehension. Without an adequate schema, word-level meanings and subsequent text meanings are often distorted.

- Comprehension results when the reader constructs a mental representation based on the verbal data from the text. The reader can build an appropriate representation only if an adequate schema exists already.

Table 3 Approaching a Text: An Overview

COMPREHENSION

Stage 1	Content and Logical Orientation
Stage 2	Mid-level or Episodic Structure
Stage 3	Reading for Detail at Phrase and Word Level

(Phrase and Word Level)

PRODUCTION

Stage 4	Reconstruction of Textual Information at Phrase and Word Level
Stage 5	Sentence-level Reconstruction
Stage 6	Supersentential Construction of Information/Opinion

Table 4A Approaching a Text: Comprehension Stages

Stage 1:	Students preview work to establish the content and logical orientation of the text.
Stage 2:	Students identify mid-level or episodic structure.
Stage 3:	Students read for detail—beyond gist or global comprehension.

Table 4B Approaching a Text: Production Stages

Stage 4:	Students compare word- and phrase-level reconstruction of textual information in matrices.
Stage 5:	Students reconstruct textual information at the sentence level.
Stage 6:	Readers construct their opinions about textual information beyond the simple sentence/at the discourse level.

Table 5 Pedagogical Recommendations

The Comprehension Stages

Stage 1: Students preview work to establish the content and logical orientation of the text.

Class activity

Class reacts for five to eight minutes to a teacher-suggested topic followed by a subsequent cursory reading (skimming or scanning) of a text dealing with that topic.

Reader-based phase

Prior to looking at the text, the class has reacted to and speculated about the scope or focus of the text topic.

Text-based phase

After scanning the text, students delimit the topic of the article exclusively by means of words and phrases in initial paragraphs.

Stage 2: Students identify mid-level or episodic structure.

Class activity

Class spends three to five minutes finding shifts in topic, character, events, and setting of the story or text.

Reader-based phase

Students scan text format, semantics, and discourse markers that divide the text into subsets of the global topic.

Text-based phase

Practice in recognition of discourse markers—their function and impact on language usage in the text (e.g., changes in word order).

Stage 2 is generally superfluous with shorter texts (those with fewer than 500 words). Both types of recognition exercises focus student attention on language that connects messages in a passage.

Stage 3: Students read for detail—beyond gist or global comprehension.

Class activity

Recognition of micropropositions related to global or episode propositions.

Reader-based phase

Students scan:

- sentences for the ways they relate to the main concepts (stage 1);
- episodes of the text (stage 2).

Initially this can be a class activity.

Text-based phase

Students read silently to a predetermined point in the selection to locate two or three examples of text language representative of the logic of the text (e.g., narration, cause and effect, comparison, thesis and example) and place that information into a matrix or matrices.

Table 5 Pedagogical Recommendations (cont.)

The Production Stages

Stage 4: Students compare word- and phrase-level reconstruction of textual information in matrices.

Class activity subsequent to reading outside of class

Students assess their matrices—preferably in the form of written précis—through class discussion, small group work, and teacher evaluation.

Reader-based phase

Students organize text phrases that convey details (micropropositions) in a way that is consistent with the textual pattern of main ideas (macropropositions) they perceive.

Text-based phase

Only lexicon from the text may be used at this stage. Students' matrices reveal only minor adjustments in text language (e.g., some changes in singular or plural form, deletion of words they judge superfluous.

Stage 5: Students reconstruct textual information at the sentence level.

Class activity based on writing done largely outside of class

Students generate sentences based on their matrices.

Reader-based phase

Students create the language of factual details in the text that relates to perceived macromessages of that text.

Text-based phase

Students expand the text phrases in their matrices into simple sentences. They modify formal properties of textual language according to the teacher's assessment of their chief deficiencies in their speaking or writing (e.g., transformations such as tense changes, negation, active to passive, singular and plural, adjective agreement).

Stage 6: Readers construct their opinions about textual information beyond the simple sentence/at the discourse level.

Class activity based on writing done in small groups or outside of class

Students generate at least four or five connected sentences based on their earlier sentence-level statements. Relevant discourse markers and their impact on formal features, such as case or word order, must be emphasized by the teacher.

Reader-based phase

Students extrapolate from the language of factual details in the text to create their own macromessages about the implications and significance of these details.

Text-based phase

Students use the text as a reference to confirm their assertions and to check formal properties of relevant language.

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Table 6 Formatting a Process Reading Assignment

Preview (identifying situation or schema of the text **before** reading)

The text deals with ________________ (who and/or what)
________________ (when)
________________ (where)

in order to show
- features of stages in ____________________
- impact of ____________ on ______________.
- solutions to problems of ____________________.
- comparison between __________ and ________.

Identification

1. Recognition level

Where in the text do you find information about the following topics:
OR
This text is about the general topic ________________________.

Make a list of the subtopics and locate them by paragraph and line number in the text.

2. Organizational recall level

Group relevant words and phrases from the text under the following categories:

Example 1: historical event features of event

Example 2: when what happened

Sentence Structure (reproducing textual information at sentence level)

Example 1: Using the information in Example 1 above, write sentences which list the events and their features in chronological order. Use words like "first," "next," "shortly thereafter," "much later" as you find appropriate.

Example 2: Write sentences expressing what the person in Example 2 above should have done. Use the subjunctive and the form: WHO + WHAT // WHAT
"if - then" connectives

Connected Statements (connecting sentences on the language and information of the text)

Example 1: Write 5 sentences for or against the following statement. Use causal sentences to justify your position.

Example 2: Write a paragraph of 5-6 sentences which explains an alternative ending to the story.

[See Tables 7 and 8 for other variants, each with a slightly different focus.]

Table 7 Text-Based Reading Tasks That Encourage Form-Based Strategies

Analyzing vocabulary in terms of form-meaning relationships

Students use various marking conventions (highlighting, underlining, circling, linking) to exemplify meaning-form relationships as they manifest themselves in vocabulary. Sample categories include:

semantic fields (e.g., vocabulary pertaining to electing/selecting/making choices)
derivational relationships (e.g., verb→noun; noun→adjective; verb→adjective)
tense marking and tense alternation
verb position in different clause types
pro-forms (pronouns and their referents)

Noting cohesion markers

Students circle the connectors and/or visual text organizers (illustrations, format, indentations, headings, bolding, italics) to expose the structure and cohesion of the text. They note the words that suggest:

narration (*in the beginning, thereafter, on the following day, meanwhile, finally*)
comparison and contrast (*but, on the contrary, on the other hand, nonetheless*)
causality (*therefore, consequently, as a result*)
expansion of ideas (*moreover, furthermore, in effect*)
qualifications (*yet, perhaps, to be sure*)

Textual grammar searches

Often texts make their points with particularly striking adjectives, embedded structures, unusual word order, particular use of aspect (introduction of passive voice or contrasting time frames). When students are aware that these features serve a meaning function—e.g., to make a text more upbeat, to render the text message more impersonal, to highlight the "pastness" of a particular experience—finding the forms is meaningful, too.

Table 8 Text-Based Reading Tasks That Encourage Meaning-Based Strategies

Scanning
Students quickly search the longer text for specific information (first reading).

Highlighting
Students underline, circle, box, or highlight familiar or guessable words/expressions, then focus just on highlighting to determine the gist of the text (topic development) or a particular emphasis you as the teacher have selected.

DTR activity
Directed thinking, directed reading as a class or group activity.

Summary Construction
Students choose from one-line summaries the one that best captures paragraph 1, 2, etc. Depending on the students' level of abilities, the nature of the text, and, most importantly, the goals of this entire activity, the summary could be constructed by the teacher or the students, and could be in English or the second language.

Matrix
Sorting out key factual information. Depending on the text, this could be:

	TOPIC	COMMENT
	Who said what	… meaning what
OR	What happened first	… how did people react/what resulted
OR	Features of one item/person	… features of contrasting item/person
OR	Problems of X	… solutions/implications listed

Semantic Mapping
Students create trees, charts, or maps to show sequence of events, relationships of topics to subtopics, characters to features of their personality, behavior, etc.

Illustration
Students further describe in class a significant segment or event in the text

Reading for comprehension only

The above guidelines for approaches to second language reading have purposely linked reading to the other modalities, particularly speaking and writing. However, as we know, reading comprehension does not necessarily need to make that connection. By briefly focusing on the special characteristics of reading for comprehension only, we become more aware of the unique opportunities of a second language reading pedagogy within the larger context of second language acquisition.

In terms of the demands it puts on the second language learner, reading for comprehension only has two advantageous features. First—and this is not a mere tautology—it does not require the learner to focus on *producing and creating* responses in the second language or, for that matter in the first language. Put slightly differently, initially it primarily requires meaning creation in thinking; in that sense it is akin to listening. Second, within limits it allows learners to adjust the time available for their processing, perhaps *the* critical aspect in the initial stages of learning to perform with second language material; in that sense it is akin to writing.

Taken together, these aspects strongly justify comprehension only tasks, particularly at the beginning levels of instruction. In this fashion reading will lay important ground work for second language learning in all modalities: it sets the stage for ultimately turning comprehensible input into comprehensible output.

Instructional Aspects of Second Language Reading
Learning to Read—Reading to Learn

Thus far we have focused on the process nature of reading and how classroom practices might attend to it within the major parameters of second language knowledge and general literacy or background knowledge. Another perspective on reading is in terms of the purposes it serves within the larger second language instructional context.

We can broadly state these as "learning to read" and "reading to learn." Though these goals are inseparable, they tend to receive different emphases along the acquisitional sequence, from beginning to advanced. That partially sequenced set of purposes for reading is realized with an array of teaching practices. In addition to following a progression from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," teachers can also deliberately stage either emphasis at any given point of the learners' acquisition process. The result is a rich palette of possibilities for incorporating reading at any level of second language learning, a good number of which were already stated in conjunction with the general overview of approaches to texts. What is most important is that teachers have available to them numerous and clear choices which allow them to take their particular teaching situation into account as they work to enhance students' second language reading proficiency.

Learning to read

Our consideration of "learning to read" has two interrelated dimensions: learning the formal features of the second language, and developing second language reading strategies. Both dimensions are, of course interrelated and both critically depend on the learners' first language literacy and background knowledge.

Learning the formal features of the second language through reading

As already demonstrated, reading of authentic texts is intended to enhance students' acquisition of the formal inventory of the second language in the three interrelated categories of vocabulary, grammar (sentence level grammar and discourse level grammar), and text structure and organization. Since these three areas have been the traditional foci for reading, we need to note how they are incorporated in this approach to second language reading.

Vocabulary. Understanding second language reading as an interaction that involves both top-down and bottom-up processing continues to acknowledge the indispensability of a rich vocabulary in the second language: we know that good word processors are also good text processors. The big difference from past practice revolves around the best ways for acquiring that crucial store of vocabulary.

Two major changes over past practice can be noted. First we are moving away from learning words as "naked" separate items to learning them "dressed" within their context of occurrence, that is, within the logic of the text where they occur. Examples for the former are alphabetical vocabulary lists, but also lists that categorize words by parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, prepositions). By contrast, learning vocabulary as contextually dressed uses to advantage the inherent context of a coherent text.

A second shift regarding vocabulary learning is the differentiation between "potential" and "productive" vocabulary. This distinction builds on the notion that second language learning is a dynamic and oftentimes long process, as contrasted with being thought of as an "off/on" event. While it may be difficult to define precisely what constitutes "knowing a word," the ability to process it effectively for its meaning, something that often requires creative contextual guessing, is surely at the base of that knowing. Since reading can be staged as a progression from comprehension to production tasks (see above) it is particularly advantageous for vocabulary acquisition.

Finally, the use orientation of communicative language classrooms has exposed the artificiality of the division between vocabulary and grammar. In order for a word to be usable and useful in expressing a certain meaning it must wear a "dress" that intricately weaves together threads of meaning and form, required as well as optional features, central as well as peripheral meanings and functions. The kind of efficient processing in all modalities which characterizes competent users presupposes rich access to what we call fixed lexical routines, or "lexical phrases." These collocations operate at the interface between vocabulary and grammar and manifest one of the key features in language use, its fixedness as well as its open-ended creativity. More than the other modalities, reading can initially raise learners' awareness of this critical aspect of language and, in conjunction with the other modalities and over time, lead to fluent and accurate language use.

Grammar. The practice of reading promotes a much deeper understanding of the workings of grammar than do morphological and syntactic rules, which are often limited to the word and simple sentence level—students' (and often teachers') notion of "grammar." Of the many possibilities two deserve to be singled out: (1) foreshadowing a feature through reading comprehension as a first stage toward its subsequent productive use; and (2) a focus on grammatical and lexical features that are unique to discourse length language as contrasted with sentence level language.

When we observe that learning involves a number of phases and stages until a feature is "known," we implicitly acknowledge learners' need for a period of "comprehensible input" before they can produce "comprehensible output." However we operationalize the notion of "comprehensible input," attention, awareness, and noticing are critical preconditions for comprehension and learning. Applying that insight to grammar we might, for example, foreshadow with a number of reiterations the formation of compound tenses in the Indo-European languages. Position requirements in main or subordinate clauses, choice of auxiliary, forms of the participle and their major patterns, the expression of modality—all can be attended to through carefully queued sorting tasks long before learners would themselves actively use such forms (for a review of possibilities, see particularly Table 6). Such attentiveness sharpens learners' ability to become aware of major meaning-form patterns, thereby significantly reducing, perhaps even eliminating big chunks of purely formal grammatical explanation. In other words, with appropriate tasks, reading is an obvious way for developing and shaping a range of favorable second language processing strategies, in comprehension and production.

Text structure and organization. By definition, reading of authentic texts makes possible a focus on discourse grammar, as contrasted with the more standard focus on sentence-level grammar. Among discourse features are an array of markers of cohesion and coherence (e.g., the special alternation of full noun and pronoun reference, or of shifting from indefinite to definite articles; the linkage between stating a topic and then commenting on it; the treatment of different tenses and aspect). Adverbial connectors, conjunctions, and entire families of discourse markers, such as those signaling cause and effect relationships, temporal sequencing, or comparison, reveal not only how a text is structured but carry its particular logic and provide critical information about the stance of the author or various "actors" in a story (see Table 6).

Devising and performing with reading tasks that focus on the discourse level is a crucial and intellectually deeply engaging and insightful way of expanding our view of how language works. It is difficult to imagine a better approach to developing in learners a sophisticated awareness of how language "lives" and how we "live" with and in language.

Developing second language reading strategies

The kind of noticing of discourse organizational features described above is not merely a matter of top-down or bottom-up processing in the narrow sense. At heart it targets learners' development of global meaning-making strategies for a whole range of texts. Past practice might lead us to restrict such goals to the advanced learner, not even the intermediate, and certainly not the beginning learner. However, the argument here is exactly the opposite: in terms of text comprehension no one gains more from being able to discern major organizational structures than beginning and intermediate learners. Fortunately that benefit is quite attainable, inasmuch as the discerning of textual organization is much more a matter of cognitive than of linguistic ability. In other words, second language text-based reading strategies are both teachable and eminently learnable to the extent that our learners have well developed adult literacy skills.

The benefits to be obtained with such macro-organizational knowledge are multiple. They begin with the ability to encode meaning into a text, from the macro- to the mid- and local level, making "contextual guessing" no longer the haphazard (and flawed!) enterprise that it seems to be. But the benefits of that kind of an understanding of texts go far beyond reading. For example, the connection between awareness of text organizational features and coherent writing is well established. Likewise, learners will be the more able to present a coherent oral argument, even with relatively simple language, the more aware they are of the discourse markers that written language uses for that purpose. Again, extended foreshadowing through reading is likely to be both a necessity for developing reading competence and an exciting and intellectually stimulating possibility that bridges second language and first language learning.

Reading to learn

Given the longstanding focus on using the second language to access other knowledge, reading to learn needs little justification. Of greater interest is the enlarged range of topics which we can consider appropriate for second language readers once we have scaled the "authentic-text" hurdle.

Reading for content information

One of the important by-products of the communicative orientation is that content has gained significantly in importance as compared with formal features. As stated, in the past content, particularly subject matter content, was an issue only for the advanced learner, major and non-major alike. Now we have significantly broadened the spectrum of topics for all learners. For example, the movement to spread language across the curriculum and to connect language and content instruction focuses heavily on reading comprehension. Whether the model results in courses being taught in a second language by faculty in another discipline (e.g., economics, business, engineering, philosophy, health care) or whether an English-language course has so-called "trailer sections" added to it that allow students to read supplementary texts in their second language, content dominates and is highly varied.

In either case the kinds of strategies for "learning to read" outlined above are crucial for the success of such programs, if for no other reason than the relatively limited language proficiency which can reasonably be expected of the second language learners in the American collegiate setting. This is particularly true for the trailer sections that are often appended to general education courses in the first two years of undergraduate study. Foreign language faculty are likely to be called upon to staff these sections, a teaching assignment that can become exciting with a rich pedagogy of reading that includes activities that span the goals of learning to read and reading to learn.

Reading for cultural knowledge and awareness

In the past, cultural knowledge that second language learners should possess was often equated with what has been called "achievement" culture, that is, factual knowledge regarding the great accomplishments with which a language and culture group identifies itself particularly strongly.

More recently, "culture' has been expanded to include the culture of everyday life. As a result, the relationship of language and culture and the extent to which oral and written language build on and express these deep underlying cultural assumptions, are gradually being considered in the foreign language classroom. In other words, *how* something is being said or not said or *what* is being said or not said in a second language text may actually be more revealing of the second language culture than factual statements that deal with its achievements. Such reading requires a degree of self-reflective literacy which does not come automatically, neither in the first language nor in the second, but is eminently teachable, particularly within the second language learning environment.

The various suggestions presented here are intended to support just such a sophisticated second language reading pedagogy, even for beginning and intermediate learners. The potential rewards are great, since awareness of how to "read" texts for their cultural content empowers learners to become lifelong students of the other culture as well as their own. Indeed, it seems that many of the humanistic goals that we refer to in justifying second language learning in the academy depend on just such an approach to reading and to second language learning in general.

Reading for aesthetic pleasure: the incorporation of literature

Finally, the expanded scope of texts which characterizes the communicative second language classroom acknowledges as well the special place of literary texts. In fact, as Table 9 illustrates, the kind of awareness of intricate relationships between language form and meaning which was referred to in the previous section is an important basis for developing literary sensitivities.

Table 9 Literary Texts in the Classroom

Activities for Expressing and Interpreting Meaning

Whole group activities

Building a common background knowledge: Defining topic, genre, period, intended reader
Collecting necessary vocabulary
Assembling the facts
Brainstorming conceptual associations
Predicting topic development
Schema building

Small group/individual activities

Discovering key word indicative of a given meaning
Discovering parallels and contrasts in meaning
Finding illustrations of a given motif
Discovering regularities in content, sound, or form

Whole group activities

Exploring worlds of discourse
Brainstorming intentions and beliefs
Putting the data in order
Ranking and voting
Exploring alternatives and consequences
Interpretive role-playing
Exploring discourse forms
Structural parallels
Intratextual variations
Intertextual variations

Criteria for the Selection of Texts

Our deliberations have not only assumed the use of authentic texts, they have strongly advocated their use, even for beginning learners. However, that advocacy is by no means open ended. It is simply not the case that texts, just because they are authentic, should thereby be assumed also to be pedagogically suitable, appropriate for all kinds of learners and, most importantly, advantageous for the development of second language reading abilities and, ultimately, communicative language use across all modalities.

Indeed, changes in second language reading pedagogy are likely to be successful to the extent that we also reconsider our criteria for the selection of texts. In the past, we have primarily chosen texts on the basis of perceived formal simplicity or complexity, or because we considered them "interesting" in usually difficult to define ways. We have come to understand that it is just as important to consider whether learners can be assumed to have appropriate background knowledge for accurate text comprehension, and that means, more often than not, the necessary literacy skills in order to be able to offset their limited second language knowledge.

As already indicated, there is ample research evidence that an "easy" text can actually be quite demanding of students when they have little background knowledge to aid them in encoding the text. By comparison, learners can often manage the challenges of a linguistically more complex text as long as they already have or can relatively easily develop the necessary background knowledge.

For beginning and intermediate second language readers, such background knowledge is likely to begin with familiarity with certain genres or topics or major themes in the lives of people, where their understanding is not heavily or exclusively tied to events or occurrences that are highly specific to a culture.

On the surface such a recommendation would appear to contradict both the culture specificity of a literary text and the intention that it should serve as an avenue for understanding difference and diversity. However, that is not the case. By consistently requiring students to confront the significance of links between meaning and language form, the approach to reading being recommended here aids students in uncovering the deep cultural moorings of any text, literary or otherwise. Underneath the surface of "sameness" of topic or genre, they will not find the simplistic sameness of the "global village syndrome," but a highly articulated and nuanced interplay between language and culture.

Tables 10 and 11 offer important criteria for the selection of texts beyond the importance of background knowledge. Points 3-7 deserve particular attention for beginning reading assignments; texts that are opaque in that regard cause unnecessary difficulties for the second language learner. Of course, that is not to say that they cannot and should not be read at some point; but it is to say that they are best introduced when learners have developed some degree of sure footing in approaching second language reading.

Table 10 deals specifically with narrative texts, for the near-unique advantages they have for drawing out learners' background knowledge which, as we have said, translates into unique advantages for the beginning second language reader. In addition, Table 11 offers considerations for a larger range of texts. The listing does not constitute an instructional progression; instead all text types can and should be included at all instructional levels.

Table 10 Text Selection Criteria

Factors that make narrative texts more accessible:

1. Topics familiar to the students
2. Topics of interest to foreign language students
3. Substantive, readily discernible plot or message system
4. Clear sequential development
5. Well marked episodes (transitions between topics, actions, places, introduction of new characters)
6. A recognizable agent or concrete subject
7. A minimum amount of description
8. An unambiguous intent (satire or irony may confuse beginning readers)
9. An appropriate length of assignments for your class level (rough word count)

Be able to identify the following in the texts you select:

Percentage of unguessable words *not crucial* to inferring meaning _________ %
Percentage of unguessable words *crucial* to inferring meaning _________ %
Consider and exemplify the use of language in terms of abstractness
  (metaphors, symbols, hidden meanings, formulaic language)
Consider the construction of the text as:
  narrative
  problems and solutions
  contrasts
  issues and implications
Pinpoint major areas of difficulty you foresee for students:
  topic
  specifics of topic (where, when, who?)
  themes (why read this?)

Table 11 The Range of Authentic Materials

Realia Signs, announcements, menus

Descriptors Highly visual and highly contextualized

Comprehension key Experience over language

Orientational texts Short instructions, directions, advice

Descriptors Informational, short; narrow context and focus
Simple, straightforward language with overt organization (e.g., multiple headers, bullets); often article-length in a newspaper or journal

Comprehension key Balance of language and experience

Narrative texts Non-literary or literary text that tells a story or relates an event

Descriptors

Non-literary: Describes, provides background, more expansive length, from longer article to short story or book.

Literary: In telling the story, the focus is on multiple meanings in order to explore the human condition. Presupposes knowledge of cultural and linguistic/literary norms against which the literary ambiguities and multiple connections can be played out in order to obtain the meaning and significance of the text.

Comprehension key

Non-literary: Work with story schema and episodic structures; set up matrices. *Adjust the task, not the text.*

Literary: Bring out awareness of the interrelationship between language and how it expresses meanings, and what meanings it expresses. Explore life experiences, worlds of discourse, of associations, alternatives, constant motifs, parallels and contrasts.

Ascertaining Students' Reading Interests

Last but most surely not least, we must find ways to know our students, or this pedagogy, like any other, will not be successful! In line with the two major strands that come together to support effective second language reading—second language knowledge and background knowledge—we must get a well articulated sense of both aspects as they describe our students.

In terms of the kind of second language knowledge we generally attribute to our students, the biggest change is to consider the advantages of recognition or comprehension knowledge over production knowledge, a difference that is further heightened by learners' background knowledge.

That background knowledge is best ascertained at the beginning of instruction with interest surveys similar to the one included in Table 12. Their purpose is to assess students' interest in reading various types of literature, with regard to subject content, genre, biographical subject, author preferences, television viewing, career information, newspapers, and magazines.

After individual responses have been collected, a composite summary of all student responses will provide direction for planning teaching units and selecting literature for students.

Table 12 Interest Inventory

1. Listed below are some topics you can read about in books. Check the topics about which you would enjoy reading.

___ arts and crafts
___ religion
___ jobs
___ government
___ cooking
___ gardening
___ music and entertainment
___ detective stories
___ sports
___ comedy
___ mystery
___ westerns
___ love stories
___ aviation

___ hobbies
___ far away places
___ travel
___ fairy tales
___ adventure stories
___ history
___ science
___ health
___ animals
___ space
___ war
___ spy stories
___ other
____

Table 12 Interest Inventory (cont.)

2. Check below the kinds of writing which you enjoy reading.

___ long stories (novels)
___ short stories
___ poetry
___ plays
___ biographies
___ essays

3. List below persons' life stories you would be interested in reading.

4. List below authors whose books you enjoy reading.

5. Name three of your favorite television programs.

6. Name three careers (jobs) you might consider after you finish school.

7. Check any of the following newspaper sections you enjoy reading.

___ local news
___ national news
___ international news
___ sports
___ editorial
___ classified
___ comics
___ advertising
___ business
___ finance
___ entertainment
___ personal advice

Table 12 Interest Inventory (cont.)

8. Information about magazines

Please list magazines to which you currently subscribe.

Please list magazines that you periodically buy at a newsstand.

Which additional ones would you enjoy reading?

9. Which books have you read recently that you would recommend?

10. Which of the following reasons for reading describe why you read most often?

___ to solve a problem (e.g., pass a test; build, fix, or cook something)
___ to feel that I am on top of what is going on around me and in the world
___ to learn new information
___ to find ideas/opinions that agree with my own
___ to enjoy literature that is beautifully written
___ to forget my problems for a while
___ for inspiration
___ to experience events/places that I have not experienced first-hand

Concluding Comments

This discussion of a comprehensive second language reading pedagogy will serve its purpose only when teachers take its recommendations into their classrooms. It was for that reason that much of the formation was presented in the form of tables. By way of further reducing and at the same time highlighting key decision-making criteria, the unit concludes with these recommendations:

1. **Reflect on the learners**, respecting their
    background knowledge and interests
    second language level and abilities
    long-term goals with regard to language study

2. **Choose texts** in terms of their
  topic familiarity and interest
  clear, well marked, sequential development for ready discernment of plot
  saliency of language forms (including text organization) with regard to whole text meaning
  range of genre, from non-literary to literary
  relationship of known and unknown language material as it affects and is affected by the purpose of the reading task

3. **Most importantly, determine the purpose of the reading assignment and create tasks accordingly.** Consider
  the continuum of learning to read and reading to learn
  the continuum from comprehension to production
  the development of reading strategies that are more
    meaning-based and more
    form-based
  the nature of the reader's response, in terms of
    language (first language or second language) and
    language modality (comprehension only, speaking, writing)
  a balance between intensive and extensive reading
  the possibilities and limitations of in-class and out-of-class reading
  the use of reading in support of other instructional goals in the communicative classroom

4. **Finally, have the courage to make pedagogical choices and convey these to your students.**

References and Suggested Additional Reading

Bernhardt, Elizabeth. (1991). *Reading Development in a Second Language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

A comprehensive review of the research literature on the second language reading process as it arises from a synthesis of empirical data. Though the volume is not primarily methods- or classroom-oriented, it does set forth a number of well grounded principles to provide guidance for the second language instructor on such topics as controlled vs. authentic texts, readability, and expository and literary prose.

Galloway, Vicki. (1992). Toward a Cultural Reading of Authentic Texts. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Languages for a Multicultural World in Transition* (pp. 87-121). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., Northeast Conference Reports.

An excellent discussion of the incorporation of texts at all levels of instruction to encourage cultural awareness. That goal of greater cultural awareness is seen as a process and a discovery procedure, not a product. Among the topics discussed are the challenge of authentic texts and their selection; the role of first and second languages; first and second cultures; the development of tasks for cross-cultural discovery arranged in four stages of "thinking," "looking," "learning," and "integrating." Many very practical pedagogical suggestions are included.

Grellet, Françoise. (1981). *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Though by now augmented by other publications on reading and perhaps somewhat dated in its theoretical approach, this volume still constitutes a valuable, accessible entry into the field of second language reading.

Kramsch, Claire. (1985). Literary Texts in the Classroom: A Discourse Model. *The Modern Language Journal* 69(4): 356-366.

A highly useful article full of suggestions for working with literary texts in the beginning and intermediate classroom. The list in Table 9 is extracted from this article.

Phillips, June K. (1985). *Proficiency-Based Instruction in Reading: A Teacher Education Module*. Introductory Packet; Applications Packet; Sample Materials. Material produced in conjunction with a grant (#G008402271) from the International Research and Studies Program, U.S. Department of Education, June K. Phillips, Project Director.

Aside from elaborating in nontechnical language on the five-stage reading model, the three components of this grants project have the additional advantages of including something like a model workshop on reading and presenting pedagogical suggestions for sample texts in Mandarin Chinese, Beginning and Advanced ESL, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Thai.

Swaffar, Janet, Katherine Arens, and Heidi Byrnes. (1991). *Reading for Meaning: An Integrated Approach to Language Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.

A treatment of second language reading that is based both in theories of language learning and reading as they have been developed in a number of disciplines (e.g., literary criticism, linguistics, psychology, anthropology) and in the praxis of the second language classroom. In focusing on reading as the construction of meaning on the part of students, its carefully sequenced pedagogy is intended to help foreign language learners practice mental and verbal reconstructions of the logical coherences of the reality that is presented in second language written texts as cultural artifacts, rather than the reality of their immediate physical environment. Within this overall thrust, the volume is noteworthy for its integration of language learning and meaningfulness (language and content) and of building up speaking capability through reading.

The Author

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Writing in the Foreign Language Curriculum
Soup and (Fire)crackers

Diane Musumeci
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

one of a series of modules for the

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Words! Words! We're Surrounded by Words! 3

Writing: Inspiration and Perspiration 4

Great Expectations 5

First- vs. Second- vs. Foreign-language Writing 7

Put It in Writing! Task Design 8

Caution! Dictionary in Use! 19

Responding to Students' Writing: Feedback and Evaluation 20

Conclusion 24

References 25

Suggested Additional Reading 28

Appendices 29

Introduction

Writing is a dangerous, magical, furtive, courageous, passionate activity. Edicts, incantations, prayers, formulae, secret messages, graffiti, declarations of rights, laws, and love notes attest that the written word influences our lives in ways unbounded by time or distance. And yet for many people, writing is better characterized as "painful," "difficult," or—worse—"boring." In this module, we will first consider the role that writing plays in your lives and the lives of your students, your attitudes towards writing and the teaching of writing, and the purpose of learning to write in a foreign language. Later, we will look at various kinds of writing tasks and determine how they might be integrated into a beginning-level, communicatively-based foreign language course. Finally, we will investigate different systems for the evaluation of students' written work as well as some of the effects that evaluation can have on subsequent foreign language writing.

Upon completion of the module, you should be able to (1) justify a multifaceted, communicative approach to writing during the early stages of foreign language learning, (2) evaluate the design of a writing task for beginning-level language learners, and (3) determine which evaluation criteria are most appropriate for specific types of writing tasks and learners.

Words! Words! We're Surrounded by Words!

To begin our discussion of writing, let's first consider what we *read*. Take two to three minutes to list as many types of texts as you can. Include everything you read—in your first language as well as your second language—in your everyday lives, not only in an academic context.

______________	______________	______________
______________	______________	______________
______________	______________	______________
______________	______________	______________
______________	______________	______________

Ask a volunteer to record everyone's replies on the board or an overhead projector. Once all the responses have been transcribed, compare your list with a list recently generated by a group of undergraduates at a large public university (Appendix A). Which items did you include that they didn't? Which did they incorporate that you didn't think of? Now divide your lists into two columns: texts you read in your first language and those you read in your second language. Which kinds of texts—first language and second language—do you read more frequently? Why? Put a check (✓) next to the texts that you have not only *read*, but also *written in your first language*. Put a star (★) next to the texts you have *written in your second language*. What impresses you most about the lists you've examined?

Reading and writing are intimately linked. While it is true that not everyone who can read can also write, it is also obvious that without writers readers would be out of business! And even though we personally may not produce every type of document, each text—from TV listings to computer manuals to *The Divine Comedy*—was created by a writer somewhere. From the myriad kinds of texts we read daily, it is abundantly clear that although authors are typically invisible—we rarely see people in the actual process of writing—the written products are both ubiquitous and diverse: they appear in a wide range of contexts; they are intended for a variety of audiences, each created for a particular purpose. In order to craft effective texts, ones that communicate successfully with readers, authors must keep in mind the purpose, audience, and context for which they are writing.

Take a few minutes now to go through the list of texts you prepared earlier and state for each (1) who the writer's audience is (whether it is general, specific, or highly specialized; its gender, age, and social class) and (2) the purpose for the writing (to entertain, to inform, to persuade, to frighten, to solicit, to enamor). Which texts are easiest to categorize? Why? Is any one kind of audience or purpose "better" than any other? Which kinds of text do you most enjoy reading? Which do you like to write? In your opinion, is there any kind of text that shouldn't be written (or read) in an academic context? Why?

Not all readers aspire to be professional writers—very few of us will ever write a bestseller—but we are all authors of some kind or another, even if only of classnotes, memos, and grocery lists. The very act of writing can help us clarify our thoughts, organize our ideas, test our knowledge of a topic. And even in our image-oriented society, writing remains a powerful form of communication. Which of the texts that you listed would you also want to help your students learn to write? Why? How do you think that your decision to pursue graduate studies affects your attitudes toward writing?

Consider This: Did anyone include "compositions" in the list of things they read? The undergraduates (Appendix A) didn't. Why not? Who is the audience for a composition? In what context does composition writing occur? What is its purpose?

Writing: Inspiration and Perspiration

In any treatment of foreign language pedagogy, reference is usually made either to "the four skills" (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) or to the "receptive" skills (listening and reading) versus the "productive" ones (speaking and writing). Instead, a more apt distinction might be made between "interpretive" skills and "expressive" skills, terms which better capture the many factors that comprise understanding and creating a text—oral or written. Interpretation of an oral text, for example, involves much more than listening: it may also entail watching a speaker's facial expression, gestures, and body language while simultaneously taking into account the context in which the message is conveyed in addition to processing the actual words of message. Moreover, listening and reading are not the passive acts that a term like "receptive" might suggest. Likewise, writing is much more than the physical act of forming symbols on paper (or at a keyboard). It entails recursive thinking and often includes both speaking (in an information-gathering phase as well as talking over ideas with other people prior to or during the writing process) and reading (for example, performing multiple readings of the text as it is being written).

Consider This: Some people claim that writing is a lonely activity because the physical act of transcribing words on paper—or at a computer keyboard—is done alone. Others see it as highly social because—once created—a text can communicate with countless people over an extended period of time and space. What has your experience with writing been? Is it the same as when you were an undergraduate? How might it change in the future?

Writing is an expressive skill. Of all the texts you (and the undergraduates) listed earlier, were any written with the sole purpose of practicing grammar? How is writing in the "real world" different from the kind of writing typically done in language classes? Is it possible to do "real world" writing in a beginning foreign language class? Why or why not? In your opinion, should writing instruction in a foreign language prepare students for the kinds of foreign language writing they might need or want to do when they've left the university, or should it concentrate on only the kinds of writing that might be required in an academic setting?

Great Expectations

Language teachers and students hold many beliefs about language learning. Such beliefs undoubtedly influence what goes on in classrooms. However, no matter what your particular beliefs may be regarding what second language learning should look like, research in second language acquisition has established that learning another language is a developmental process; that is, it proceeds in what appear to be immutable stages, at varying rates for individual learners. (For an excellent introduction to the findings of recent research in second language acquisition, see Lightbown and Spada, 1992.) Based on the ample body of evidence from content-based instruction, we also know that interpretive skills in the second language develop much more quickly than expressive skills (Harley, Allen, Cummins, and Swain, 1990). In fact, within an immersion-type approach, students can attain native-like interpretive skills. On the other hand, expressive skills require a much longer period to develop, especially in an instructional setting, even in the most communicative classrooms (Swain, 1985). Ironically, the ability that students covet most—the ability to speak the second language in a native-like manner—requires the longest period of growth.

The developmental nature of second language acquisition means that certain linguistic features will become part of learners' spontaneous expressive repertoires first, others later, still others much, much later, *regardless of when or how the structures have been taught*. This last point is fundamental to an understanding of the goal of communicative language teaching in the early stages of the foreign language curriculum in general, and the goal of writing instruction in particular. As writing is a communicative act, it certainly deserves a place in the foreign language curriculum, but teachers and learners alike must understand that students' messages—oral and written—will not be structurally perfect nor always culturally appropriate, particularly in the early stages of acquisition. Help with the native speaker's interpretation of a student-generated text can be provided by the teacher; problems with linguistic accuracy must be accepted as part of the natural, developmental, and lengthy process of learning another language.

Despite features that oral and written expression share, the two skills are not identical in nature. Writing is not simply "speaking on paper" (Dvorak, 1987). Discourse conventions are just one difference between them. Unlike speaking, when we can look at our interlocutor's face to gauge how well we're being understood, or check for comprehension and explain what it was we "meant to say," writing—once completed—is non-negotiable. The writer can no more stop the reader to ask, "Did you understand what I wrote here?" than the reader can ask the writer to explain something in the text another way. Because of this limitation, writing forces us to communicate in a clearer and more exact way than we express ourselves orally.

Writing is unlike speaking in yet another way: authors seldom have to write "on their feet"; they have time to think and to organize what they want to convey. In many situations, writers have the time to re-read what they have written; to consult a native speaker, a dictionary, or a grammar; to elicit feedback from a reader; to revise; and, finally, to edit their work. Certain formal kinds of writing—term papers and research articles, for example—demand just such revision and editing; shopping lists and informal e-mail messages do not. In the former instances, therefore, a higher level of precision is expected in the final version of the written work than we find in the latter, or in spontaneous oral expression.

The accuracy demanded by certain types of formal writing tasks in conjunction with the developmental nature of second language acquisition is a potential source of pedagogical conflict. Ways to address this issue will be discussed in the section on feedback and evaluation at the end of the module.

Consider This: Some teachers (and learners) believe that everything students produce in the second language must be error free, holding themselves to a standard that doesn't exist even in their first languages. What effect do you think this has on the way students perceive the second language and their ability to use it?

First- vs. Second- vs. Foreign-language Writing

If you're looking for a dissertation topic, here's one area that merits exploration: writing in a foreign language. The theoretical frameworks currently in use to examine writing—as a cognitive process (Flower and Hayes, 1981), as a social act (Cooper and Holzman, 1989), or as a product of the two (Flower, 1994)—derive largely from studies done in first language settings: that is, by native speakers writing for other native speakers, usually novice writers in the process of becoming more expert. It has been assumed that writing in one's first language and writing in a second language involve similar, if not identical, processes.

In a review of second language writing research, Silva (1993) acknowledges the existence of some universal aspects of writing, but he also points to evidence that suggests some major differences between the two: namely, that "though general composing process patterns are similar in L1 and L2 [first and second language], it is clear that L2 composing is more constrained, more difficult, and less effective" (p. 668). In addition, the texts produced by second language writers are structurally different from those created by first language writers: that is, they are "less fluent" and "less accurate" (ibid.).

Two obvious factors that contribute to differences between first language and second language writers are first language writers' extensive experience with varieties of written discourse and their native linguistic competence. Moreover, the research on second language writing is almost entirely based on studies conducted with university-level students enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) programs: learners who are highly literate in their first language; who have already had many years of instruction in their second language, English; who demonstrate advanced levels of second language proficiency; and for whom highly-developed literacy skills in the second language are crucial to their academic success.

The few studies that look at students enrolled in foreign language curricula at the university level must address the cognitive skills and level of first language literacy that the students possess while at the same time taking into account the limited exposure they have had to the second language. Although applications of second language writing research serve as a springboard for innovation in the foreign language curriculum (Kroll, 1990), the differences between the populations underscore the importance of further research to determine the generalizability of findings from ESL to foreign language populations, as well as from first language to foreign language research.

Consider This: Which, if any, of the conditions in which university-level ESL students find themselves match those of the undergraduate students in your beginning foreign language class? In what ways are they very different? Should writing instruction for the more advanced foreign language student who intends to study abroad be equivalent to the ESL situation at your university? Why or why not?

Put It in Writing! Task Design

Up to this point, we have listed the types of texts that we and our students read, and we have differentiated texts we read from those we typically write. We have also seen that writing in the "real world" is a communicative act in which an author attempts to convey a message to a particular audience within a certain context and for a specific purpose. Viewed in this way, writing offers another option for communicative language use in the foreign language classroom, as long as such inclusion pays heed to the particular population for which it is designed: namely, adult learners, cognitively mature and literate in their first language, but who have had limited exposure to the foreign language.

In this section, we will look at two different kinds of writing tasks: transcription and composition. Suggestions for how to use writing tasks of both types at the very earliest stages of learning to communicate in a foreign language will be presented. For each, we will see how the issues of audience, purpose, and context influence the written outcome. Keep in mind that although there is a useful distinction between the terms "transcription" and "composition," the two types of tasks are better described as a continuum, rather than clear-cut categories.

Transcription-oriented writing

Transcription is the act of copying words, spoken or written. At one end of the continuum—tracing letters, for example—it is "writing" at its most elemental. We transcribe when we copy homework assignments from the board, fill out job applications specifying all the schools we've attended and the positions that we've held, play word games like Scattergories or Hangman, write ourselves shopping and "things-to-do" lists, and list the advantages and disadvantages of going to graduate school in order to make a career choice. Any of these transcription-oriented writing tasks could easily be performed in the foreign language classroom.

The purpose of a transcription-oriented writing task will determine both its appropriateness for adult foreign language learners and how well it can be integrated into a broader instructional context. For example, are students filling out forms in the foreign language to apply for a tourist visa or a student exchange program? Are they preparing lists of the advantages and disadvantages of study abroad to inform a whole-class discussion or debate? Are they creating an inventory of appropriate clothing to pack, gifts to bring, or social behaviors to guide them in the foreign language environment? If so, then the transcription activities meet the criterion that they be responsive to learners' need to use the foreign language in a meaningful way.

A communicative approach to foreign language instruction will avoid assigning writing tasks for the sole purpose of practicing language structures. Instead, writing activities will integrate cultural and personal perspectives, along with information derived from lectures, readings, and discussions. Throughout the writing process learners will use the new language to express, interpret, and negotiate their own meanings, not merely to translate predetermined ones.

When does linguistic accuracy become an issue in beginning foreign language writing? In the case of personal notes—where the audience and the author are the same person—attention to form is not crucial: the writers only need to be able to decipher what they themselves have written. On the other hand, other types of transcription tasks—the completion of official forms, for example—require that one print legibly, in uppercase letters, with attention to accurate spelling and the way dates are written in the foreign language.

Other ways in which beginning-level learners might use functional transcription skills would be to publish a class directory by transcribing each other's names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses as they are given orally by each individual. Students might want to include other information in the directory as well: where to find tutoring help, how to locate foreign language magazines and newspapers, reviews of local restaurants and cafés, and listings of upcoming foreign language films. In the most elaborate scenario, students would assume responsibility for the design, layout, editing, and publication of the directory.

A more typical use of transcription skills involves students being given pictures of vocabulary items to label in the second language (Omaggio Hadley, 1993). Although this kind of transcription is suggested in many foreign language teaching manuals, one must be aware of the limited cognitive challenge it presents to university-level students. On the other hand, crossword puzzles are a particular type of transcription that can employ either illustrations or simple descriptions as clues. As students become more proficient in their expressive skills they might create their own crossword puzzles for their peers to solve. An even more straightforward transcription task involves students' creation of word search puzzles in which their classmates must search the puzzle—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally—for the words listed (or illustrations provided). Still using illustrations as a prompt, students might also be encouraged to create a class dictionary, by writing simple definitions in the second language and providing grammatical information (noun, verb, adjective, adverb), along with an example of the word used in context. Such a dictionary, prepared by students, could be used as a study aid or as a reference for subsequent classes to build upon. In each of the latter examples of transcription-oriented writing (the class directory, crossword puzzle, word search puzzle, and personal dictionary), the audience and the purpose for the writing demand absolute accuracy.

Another example of a transcription-oriented activity that has proven appeal for undergraduates is the MindReader game. Its aim is strictly recreational; that's a "real world" purpose, too! To play, students form teams of three to five members each. Every member of the team is given a stack of scrap paper and a pen. The game leader begins by reading aloud a category in the second language: for example, "a fruit." Everyone has 15 seconds to write one word that fits the category. During this time no one shares answers. When the time limit is up, teams take turns presenting their answers to the group. Points are scored as follows: one point for each word that correctly fits the category; zero points if the word does not. Teams earn one additional point for each match; that is, every time a word has been repeated by another member of their team. So, if a team's responses were "banana," "apple," "peach," and "banana" the team would receive four points (one for each of the four correct responses) plus one additional point (for the "banana" match) for a total of five points. If the students had written "banana," "apple," "banana," and "potato" the team would receive only four points (for three correct responses and one match). Finally, if they had written "banana," "banana," "banana," and "potato" they would receive five points (for three correct responses and two matches). As you can see, to earn the most points students must not only understand the oral clue and write an appropriate second language word, they must also take into consideration which response their teammates will most likely provide. It is precisely this last feature of the game that makes it ever so slightly more challenging—and interesting. Note that the specificity of the vocabulary required depends upon the categories constructed. (Appendix B provides additional examples of possible categories and how to expand upon them.)

Consider This: Teachers have different teaching styles, just as learners have different learning styles. Which of the transcription-oriented writing activities presented most appeals to your particular teaching style? Why? Why might it be important to include in your instructional repertoire a few writing activities that might not be your favorites? Why would you need to be especially careful about how you present those activities to your students?

Composition-oriented writing

Whether they are fun, challenging, or simply pragmatic, transcription-oriented activities limit the scope of students' expression. This may be why many teachers and students are comfortable using them at the very beginning levels of foreign language learning. Careful control of learners' output reduces the likelihood of structural errors. However, unlike merely copying words or compiling lists, composition entails a more complicated process: it involves the combination of words and phrases to express ideas and feelings, to convince, to muse, to instigate, to inform, to delight. Once again, the issue of audience, context, and purpose influences the written outcome. In a dissertation devoted to the examination of the effect of task design on foreign language learners' writing, Paulson (1993) found that students produced more thoughtful, more effective, and more accurate compositions when (1) the task was stated in terms of a problem to be solved, and (2) the audience for the writing was clearly indicated. Keeping in mind the notion that writing is a communicative act, how might composition-oriented writing tasks be used in a beginning-level foreign language classroom?

One of the most common—and well-researched—forms of composition-oriented writing is the dialogue journal. In this kind of writing, students keep a sort of diary in the foreign language. In a separate notebook used solely for the journal, students write about their daily lives, university studies, expectations, feelings, and activities. No topics are assigned: students are encouraged to write freely about whatever they like. Diary writing, by definition, is informal and personal. And because in its purest form it is intended for the author's eyes only, some adjustment must be made for its use in a pedagogical context. So, students are informed from the start that this is a particular kind of diary, a dialogue journal, which they will share with their instructor. (Because some students may never have kept a journal before, it is important to remind them of what will *not* be accepted as journal entries: namely, lists of words, transcriptions of other texts, or translations.) The number of entries to be written each week is agreed upon beforehand, and the importance of making entries on a regular basis throughout the course is emphasized: little progress will be seen if all the entries are written within the span of a week or two.

Since journal writing is a (semi-)private, informal kind of writing, structural accuracy is not a major concern. Instructors collect the journals and read them, but they are asked to respond to the *content* of students' journal entries, rather than to the form. The teacher's comments are meant to encourage learners to expand on a topic, clarify a misunderstanding, or relate some relevant information about their own lives. Thus, dialogue journals are not "corrected." Their purpose is to develop fluency and confidence in written communication. Certainly, if an individual student repeatedly misuses a particular lexical item, the instructor might provide a comment in the margin, but any kind of editing of the writing would be totally inappropriate for the genre. On the other hand, teachers may find it useful to record separately any frequently-occurring errors that appear to be common to all students. Such errors could be brought to the attention of the whole class for some focused explanation of "grammar in context." It is important to keep in mind, however, that the developmental stage of the learners may preclude the disappearance of the mistake in subsequent instances of spontaneous expression. By the way, journals are an excellent way to document students' progress in the foreign language. Beginning learners in particular will be able to see how far they have progressed from their earliest entries to the last (Casanave, 1994). And instructors who are interested in investigating developmental stages of acquisition will find that journals are rich sources of linguistic data.

Consider This: Here are sample entries from three different first semester students' journals. (English translations of the Spanish appear in Appendix C.) The teachers' comments are also included. Which teacher best understands the purpose of journal writing in the foreign language curriculum? Which student? How did you arrive at your conclusions?

Example A

(Student's entry) Me gusta mucho de mis clases esta semestre. Los libros para mi clase de "advertising" por ejemplo, son muy interesante. Mis libros de economía son muy fascinante también. Los libros de español son facil comprender. Pero, creo que un libro para mi clase de español no es muy necesario.

(Teacher's comment) ¿Es aburrido?

(Student's entry continues) La semana próxima tengo dos examens para mis clases de economía. Esta semana tengo estudiar. Economía es una clase difícil comprender a veces. Es una clase de comercio. Es tambien mi especialidad en la facultad de Artes y Ciencias.

(Teacher's comment) ¿Qué trabajo quieres tener en el futuro?

Examples continue on next page

Example B

(Student's entry)

¿Cómo está? —Bien, gracias.

El estudiante escriba el papel.

Ustedes desean hablar español.

Tú bailas bien.

Nosotros cantamos mucho.

Vosotros deseáis comprar los libros.

Ella estudia francés.

(Teacher's comment) [none]

Example C

(Student's entry) Mi familia es muy pequeño, pero muy cercano. Mi padre es un profesor de la educación física a una escuela secondaría. Mi madre eneña educación especial en la misma escula. Mi hermano Gary tiene dieciseis años, y él juega fútbol americano, basketbol, y beisbol. Mi hermana Allison tiene ocho años y le gusta gimnasia.

(Teacher's comment) Mi familia es muy pequeñ~~o~~a, pero muy ~~cercano~~ unida. Mi padre es ~~un~~ profesor de la educación física a una escuela sec~~o~~undaría. Mi madre eneña sp educación especial en la misma escula sp. Mi hermano Gary tiene dieciséis años, y él juega prep fútbol americano, basketbol, y beisbol. Mi hermana Allison tiene ocho años y le gusta gimnasia.

Used correctly, dialogue journals provide a context for real communication between individual students and the teacher. Expansion of the audience for written communication among learners can be facilitated through the use of e-mail and electronic conferencing software. Teachers may post an opinion-provoking statement on an electronic bulletin board and ask students to respond. In this context, the structural accuracy of learners' messages would be subject to a comprehensibility standard imposed by their peers. Incomprehensible messages would receive either no reaction from classmates, or a request for clarification. Students would receive credit for each post they make. Although the potential exists for interesting, relevant, "real world" communication to occur, instructors should be aware that the discourse conventions for electronic communication are not clearly delineated: the format may foster a discourse for which you are unprepared. Kern (1995) provides some fascinating data on how the use of an electronic format significantly increased the amount and diversity of first-year foreign language students' participation in class discussions.

Another kind of composition-oriented writing uses the notion of "information-gap" as a proven means to increase communication (Doughty and Pica, 1986). Tasks are created in which different people possess information that others need to accomplish a goal. Here, too, teachers must construct the writing task carefully so that the audience, purpose, and context for the writing are clear. The directions for one such task involving physical description are as follows:

> Your employer GloboNet has sent you to the airport to pick up the representative of AmerXec who will be serving as a consultant on an important project. The only way you can identify the person (you don't even know if it is a man or a woman!) is by the following description, faxed to your office this morning. (Student-prepared description attached.)

Student A's task is to identify the visiting consultant (either from among class members or from a set of photographs), based on the written description.

Instead, Student B receives these instructions:

> A member of your firm AmerXec will be serving as a consultant to GloboNet, based in [name of country in which the target language is the primary language]. Because you are one of the few employees who knows [the target language], you have been asked to fax a description of the consultant so that a representative from GloboNet will be able to identify her/him at the airport. Your boss wants to make sure that GloboNet has no trouble locating the consultant, so please ask someone to check your description before you send it and make any necessary changes. (Keep in mind that you can't be sure what the person will be wearing, so you should probably focus on physical traits.)

Student B's task is to draft a description, run it by at least one other classmate for comments, and then write the final version. (See Appendix D for a writing sample produced by a student for this exercise.)

The activity could also be carried out with students working in teams, instead of pairs, making the writing and its interpretation a cooperative effort. A natural evaluation of the writing would be whether or not the visitor was readily identified. Whether the task is completed in pairs or as a team effort, the teacher should be prepared to react to the description of the visitor from the perspective of a native speaker, and a discussion of culturally appropriate and meaningful physical descriptors might well ensue.

In a similar vein, students might compose "personal ads," looking for a potential roommate or a study partner, from among the members of the class. Again, in information-gap activities learners must communicate (orally or in writing) in the foreign language in order to solve a problem or complete a task: their use of the foreign language is always both meaning focused and purposeful.

Many teachers feel comfortable with the guided composition, in which students are first given carefully constructed and sequenced questions to answer, and then are asked to compose an essay based on their responses. An example of this kind of composition-oriented writing exercise follows. Note that even in the following guided composition, the audience, purpose, and context for the writing are made explicit.

In the Good Ol' Days

Have you ever enjoyed listening to the stories that older people tell about their childhood? Did you ever think that some day *you* might be doing the same? Today you have a chance to reminisce with your classmates and teacher about what it was like when you were a kid!

Step 1. Think back to one year of elementary school that you remember particularly well. Take your time to reminisce, so that one particular memory becomes vivid.

Step 2. Describe that time, jotting down answers to the following questions:

1. How old were you?
2. Which year of school was it? first grade? second? third? fourth? fifth? sixth?
3. What was the name of your school?
4. Where was it?
5. Did you like your teacher? What was her/his name?
6. What was the teacher like?
7. What did you use to do at school? What did you use to do after school?
8. What did you like about school?

9. What did you want to be when you grew up?
10. Why do you remember this particular time so well?

Step 3. Now, take the answers to the preceding 10 questions and turn them into a story about you and elementary school.

1. Use the answers to Questions 1-4 to help you write the first paragraph, in which you describe the setting.
2. Use the answers to Questions 5 and 6 to describe your teacher in the second paragraph.
3. In the third paragraph, use the answers to Questions 7-9 to describe what you used to do in school and after school and what your aspirations were at that age.
4. Reflect on your answer to the last question, and in the concluding paragraph explain why the memory of that particular year of school remains vivid today.
5. Give your story a title.

Step 4. STOP. Read your story all the way through. After you've finished, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the story flow smoothly? Does it have a beginning, a middle, and an end? Is there a logical connection between paragraphs?
- Does the story have a purpose? What is it (to entertain, to teach a lesson, to evoke sympathy)?
- Does the choice of words used convey the feeling I want to project (humor, warning, excitement)?
- Is the story interesting? Will it capture the attention of my audience?

Based on your answers to these questions, make changes to your story to improve it.

Step 5. Make two clean copies of your story and bring them to class with you. Find two students to act as your audience. Give them each a copy of your story to look at as you read it aloud to them.

Step 6. Ask your listener-readers to tell you what they liked about your story. Write down what they say. Now ask the readers if they have any suggestions to make your story even better. Ask them to show you exactly where it could use some improvement and write down any suggestions that they have for how to change it.

Step 7. Rewrite your story, using your readers' comments to guide you.

Step 8. Lastly, edit your final version of the story. Check that:

- all the endings of the verbs match their subjects;
- you've chosen the forms of the verbs that best convey your meaning;
- all adjectives agree with nouns (feminine/masculine,

singular/plural).
[or other appropriate second language structures]

Note that Steps 5 and 6 ask the students to share their writing within a peer group. These particular steps of the writing process will be examined more closely in the next section on feedback and evaluation. For now suffice it to mention that it is also possible for the teacher to respond to the content and organization of the writing at these points.

Finally, the key to using guided composition writing successfully in the communicative foreign language classroom is the way in which it is integrated into the instructional program. Are the compositions simply handed in and given a grade by the teacher or does the content of the essays provide the basis for a subsequent lesson or activity? In other words, who is the audience and what is the purpose of the guided composition? In the *In the Good Ol' Days* example, the students' final compositions might be used to prepare a generational profile of the students; after which, they might be compared to a similar text (contemporary or not, literary or otherwise) in the foreign language to critically examine similarities and differences between their experiences and those of someone in another time and place. Or they may serve as a springboard to an introduction to the system of elementary education in the foreign language country. Students might also be asked to consider how an elementary school experience might be more generalizable to the foreign language context than a secondary school experience.

Integration of the writing task into the whole curriculum confirms the notion that writing is not simply a skill to be acquired or displayed; rather it is a powerful shaper of the way we view ourselves and the world. Failure to pay attention to audience and purpose in designing foreign language writing tasks will result in students' reduction of the task to one whose purpose is "merely to complete the assignment" (Lee and VanPatten, 1995, p. 221) and they—as writers—may provide only "what the instructor wants" (ibid.).

Gaudiani (1981) has written a well known book about foreign language composition for the more advanced (third-year) university level, but while it offers a pedagogy that is sensitive to the problems foreign language learners confront when faced with a composition-oriented writing task, it was written before communicative language teaching took hold in foreign language curricula, and so it does not present a communicative perspective on writing. Issues of audience, purpose, and context are secondary to structural accuracy and form. Because *teachers'* expectations regarding foreign language writing profoundly affect students' written texts as well as their reactions to various kinds of feedback they receive, those issues will be addressed in the final section of this module.

Consider This: Careful! Don't confuse guided writing with grammar practice or translation activities. How does the following topic, typical of many composition activities found in foreign language textbooks, differ from the *In the Good Ol' Days* task you've just examined?

> Write a five-sentence paragraph in which you describe your plans for a summer vacation. Say when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there, and what you will do when you arrive. Be sure to use the simple future tense.

In content-based instruction, where learners study subject matter through the medium of the foreign language, students are often asked to do various kinds of composition-oriented *academic* writing: for example, sentence-level definitions, hypothesis statements, and summaries. They might also be asked to convert text to tables and vice versa. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) provide excellent examples of the kinds of academic writing tasks typically used in content-based instructional programs. However, keep in mind that many of the activities the authors present were created with a relatively advanced ESL population in mind and would require adaptation to the foreign language classroom, especially at beginning levels of instruction. On the other hand, there is nothing to prevent even very early-stage learners from successfully completing a content-based writing task, similar to the following:

> The following assignment is due tomorrow: "Write a single paragraph in which you describe the most salient features of the physical geography of Italy. You will receive one point for each correct piece of information you provide."
>
> Unfortunately, you missed the class during which the instructor went over this information. Thank goodness, you've always been pretty good in geography, and you have borrowed a classmate's notes to help you out. But when you open Sylvia's notebook, you realize that she takes very sketchy notes indeed! Here's all you have to go on:
>
> > penisola, Mare Mediterraneo. mari: Adriatico, Ionio, Tirreno, Ligure, di Sardegna. paesi confinano: Spagna (ovest), Francia (nord-ovest), Svizzera & Austria (nord), Slovenia (est). catene montuose: Alpi (N, O->E);

Appennini (N->S). 2 isole, GRANDI: Sicilia, Sardegna. Fiume +lungo = il Po. Pianura padana = fertile, coltivazione agricola.

In this instance, the student uses the key words to produce a coherent foreign language paragraph. The evaluation criteria are built into the assignment: one point for each correct piece of information.

Finally, a discussion of writing would be incomplete without mention of creative writing. Stories, poems, songs are all examples of creative writing tasks that have been suggested for use in the foreign language classroom (Lach-Newinsky and Seletzky, 1986; Maley and Duff, 1989; Omaggio Hadley, 1993, among others). What role does this kind of writing—whose purpose is not to inform, but to enrich—have in the beginning-level foreign language classroom? Kramsch (1993) provides a convincing argument in favor of poetry-writing in the foreign language, citing above all the pleasure students can derive from it. Interestingly, she suggests that students receive feedback on their poetry within peer response groups (pp. 170-171), along much the same lines as indicated in the guided composition example above.

Consider This: In a research article delightfully entitled "Spinach to Chocolate," Winer (1992) provides insight into prospective teachers' reactions to second language writing and how to teach it. One of the most interesting revelations came as the student teachers were asked to complete the writing assignments they themselves had created: most found them uninteresting and pointless! A good rule of thumb to follow when you've prepared a writing assignment is to actually do it yourself *before* you give it to your students. How do you think this might improve the tasks?

Caution! Dictionary in Use!

Vocabulary acquisition is just beginning to receive the attention it merits in second language research. Although learners have long felt that an extensive vocabulary is essential to understanding and using the second language, textbooks have traditionally given precedence to rules of morphology and syntax over lexicon and lexical semantics, under the assumption that learners will simply plug the right words into the structures. The subtitle of this module, "soup and (fire)crackers," addresses the danger of relying on a dictionary to supplement the limited vocabulary of most beginning foreign language writers.

Experienced teachers of composition regale us with examples of students' misuse of words and expressions: "My mother agitated the cake." (The student was looking for a synonym for "mix.") or "Drop your pants here and have a good time!" (from a sign in a dry cleaner's window). The first semester learner of Italian who wrote "minestra e petardi" to describe what she had eaten for dinner the previous evening ingested the wrong kind of "crackers," to be sure! Another foreign language learner protested that he didn't care for the football "carriage," unaware that there is more than one kind of "coach." A student of French created an interesting hybrid: "les oiseaux mouche." Birds *do* fly, but only as a verb; genetic engineering doesn't yet allow for a bird-insect combination!

Mistakes of this kind are inevitable, as beginning language learners grope for words to express their intended meanings. A brief lesson in dictionary use might avert some of the errors. A discussion of the problem with literal translation and the lack of one-to-one correspondence between words in their first language and in the second language would expand learners' appreciation for the richness and subtlety of language. More importantly, a sustained curricular focus on the development of an abundant and varied vocabulary would go a long way toward easing the linguistic burden of foreign language writing.

In the meantime, very early-stage learners might appreciate a pre-composing brainstorming session in which a list of relevant vocabulary is generated by the class and reproduced on the board or a handout. Again, in classrooms where the focus is on the exchange of meaningful information, instructors must be careful not to supply students with a prefabricated list from which to simply select vocabulary. Rather, they will need to elicit from the students themselves the lexical items that they need to communicate their own meanings for the purpose and audience at hand.

Consider This: Do you have any funny examples of non-native writing to share? Have you ever been in a second language situation where you used the wrong word? How did you feel when it was pointed out to you?

Responding to Students' Writing: Feedback and Evaluation

In the section on task design we have seen how the context, audience, and purpose of the writing affect the final written product. It makes sense that the criteria used to evaluate such writing take into consideration those same factors. In fact, we've seen that some writing tasks seem to have appropriate evaluation criteria built right in. Certain types of writing—for example, crossword puzzles, official forms, telephone listings, and formal publications—require strict attention to structural accuracy. Personal lists, notes, informal communication, and dialogue journal entries do not. On the other hand, due to the developmental nature of second language acquisition, assigning composition-oriented writing tasks that demand high levels of structural accuracy—for example, formal essays, term papers, business correspondence, and editorials—to early-stage learners will likely result in frustration and avoidance of foreign language writing.

When crafting a formal piece of writing for an audience outside themselves, good writers plan, organize, draft, read, discuss, re-read, revise, and edit their work to ensure that their messages are conveyed as effectively as possible. There is a great deal of research—first language and second language—on peer response as a way to promote these aspects of writing. Some of the advantages to using such groups are that they encourage collaborative interaction among learners (Bruffee, 1984; De Guerrero and Villamil, 1994); they provide opportunities for students to practice politeness strategies (Johnson and Yang, 1990); they result in a greater level of student involvement in the writing task (Stanley, 1992); and they generate a variety of negotiation strategies among learners (Mendonça and Johnson, 1994). De Guerrero and Villamil (1994) also contend that through such interaction students are "provided by others with strategic behavior that they can later model and apply on their own" (p. 493). It should be noted, however, that in peer response groups made up wholly of foreign language students who share a common first language, they may well resort to it in order to complete Steps 5 and 6 of the composition process (see the *In the Good Ol' Days* exercise). If the instructor wishes instead to keep all interaction in the foreign language, students may need to be given key phrases to help them express their suggestions in the foreign language ("It would be better," "It's not clear," "This doesn't make sense."). In a welcome study of peer response and its effect on revision in a first-year foreign language curriculum, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) report that it *is* possible to maintain the foreign language environment throughout the revision process and that collaborative revision resulting from the use of peer response groups enhances the content, organization, and vocabulary of students' writing in the foreign language to a significantly greater extent than careful teacher feedback.

Importantly, Leki (1991) notes that the kind of feedback that university-level ESL students say they want to receive on their writing is a direct reflection of their beliefs about language learning (based on previous language learning experiences?) and their perception of the teacher's (or the institution's) expectations of them. She reports that students who believe that what they produce in the second language must be structurally perfect will be frustrated by a teacher or by peers who insist on giving relatively large amounts of attention to content and the validity of the ideas expressed in the writing, while paying scant attention to surface grammatical errors. These findings are particularly interesting because such learner beliefs continue to exist despite research that shows that university professors in content areas other than English composition react much more negatively to second language learners' errors in content and organization than they do to surface grammatical mistakes (Santos, 1988; Johns, 1993). Clearly, teachers and learners of second language writing must establish beforehand realistic expectations for the kind of feedback that will be provided and why.

Despite a tenacious belief that correcting students' errors will result in their elimination, the developmental nature of second language acquisition does not support that belief. Furthermore, research has shown that beginning-level foreign language learners are not good at correcting their own or each others' grammatical errors, even when given some indication from the teacher that an error exists (Frantzen and Rissell, 1987; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1992). Interestingly, even Gaudiani's 1981 examples of students' compositions reveal recurring grammatical errors, despite her careful correction of students' drafts. Moreover, teachers who emphasize grammatical accuracy as a first step in the writing process receive subsequent drafts of students' writing in which only surface errors are corrected, leaving glaring organizational and content errors intact (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994).

Can nothing be done to improve the accuracy of students' writing? Semke (1984) and Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) both found that the single best predictor of improvement in students' writing was the amount of second language writing that they produced; that is, writing improves significantly the more students write. Semke reports that instructors who commented on the content of students' writing resulted in learners who wrote more and with greater accuracy than did those who received any form of error correction. In a similar vein, Frantzen (1995) found that within a content-based foreign language instructional sequence second year university-level learners' written accuracy improved as much as a control group's, despite the fact that the control group had received explicit grammatical instruction (daily grammar review and error correction on written work), whereas the experimental group had received none. Conversely, Lalande (1982) found that second-year university learners of German could improve the accuracy of their writing more by correcting coded errors and tracking the number and kinds of errors they made throughout the semester than by simply correcting mistakes flagged by their instructor. Unfortunately, his study did not compare the effect of no error correction at all, as did the other studies, nor did it address issues of content or organization in students' writing.

Research has shown that correcting every grammatical error, especially in composition-oriented writing, is not an effective way to improve students' performance, besides it being a laborious and time-consuming task for the instructor. But if not by grammar correction, how might teachers respond to students' writing?

Here are the writing tasks we've discussed:

a. dialogue journal
b. crossword puzzle
c. geography paragraph
d. foreign visitor at the airport problem
e. *In the Good Ol'Days* composition
f. personal dictionary
g. MindReader game

Here are some evaluation criteria that have been used in beginning-level foreign language classes. Which do you think best suits each of the tasks? Does any one set of criteria work for all tasks? Why or why not?

_____ 1. Student receives 1 point if the sentence makes sense; another point if the grammatical form is correct.

_____ 2. Student receives two scores: a holistic score on the overall quality of the text and a separate score for the ability to control one particular grammar point that has been specified beforehand (for example, definite articles, noun-adjective agreement, etc.)

_____ 3. Student receives a ✓ if s/he has attempted to convey an original message and has written a sufficient amount; a ✓- if the student has either repeated previous messages or has written less than the pre-specified amount; a **0** if the student has written nothing.

_____ 4. Student earns a total score weighted for each of the following categories: content (30%), organization (25%), vocabulary (25%), language (20%).

_____ 5. Student receives a point for a comprehensible, sensible answer.

Consider This: Choose one of the writing tasks presented in this module and indicate briefly how *you* would respond to a student's writing. Then meet with at least two other people who will also be teaching a beginning-level class, and ask them if they agree with the kind of feedback you've chosen for that particular task. On what basis are you assessing the writing? See if you can formulate some criteria that all three of you agree on for evaluating early-stage learners' writing. Be explicit: put them in writing!

Because many of the research findings on students' reactions to writing instruction have been based on data collected from Asian students enrolled in U.S. universities, recent studies have begun to look at the effect that students' cultural background may have on their reactions to current innovations in second language writing pedagogy: peer review groups and revised evaluation procedures, in particular. Zhang (1995) notes that many ESL students do not welcome peer reviews of their writing; they prefer receiving feedback only from the teacher. Why do you think this is? What must these learners understand the purpose of writing to be? And do North American students enrolled in foreign language classrooms in the United States react to writing assignments and evaluation criteria like ESL learners (because they have had similar language learning experiences) or the same way they do in their first language (because they have already experienced this type of writing pedagogy in English)?

The type of writing that we ask students to do—if any at all—ultimately depends upon our assessment of the function that writing has in the curriculum. If you decide to treat writing only as grammatical gymnasium, then the issues of purpose, audience, and context are of merely tangential importance: your primary goal will be to ensure structural accuracy, and the students will see their task in a similar way. On this point, the research evidence is clear: students' expectations regarding feedback and evaluation mirror their teachers' attitudes toward writing. Teachers who give precedence to grammatical accuracy, regardless of the task—either by weighting it more heavily or as the sole evaluation criterion—encourage students to revise their written work by changing only surface features and not substantive issues like content, logical argumentation, and organization in their writing. Teachers then need to ask themselves how important a grammatically accurate product is, if its substance is questionable.

Conclusion

Given beginning learners' limited control over linguistic structures, writing in the foreign language—especially composition-oriented writing—can become an onerous, frustrating activity when it asks students to continually do things well beyond their level of expertise. Teachers who understand the communicative nature of writing, as well as some basic principles of second language acquisition, will be able to defuse such an undesirable situation, permitting students to experience writing as the dangerous, magical, furtive, courageous, expressive activity it is. For "the great art of writing is the art of making people real to themselves with words" (Logan Pearsall Smith, U.S. essayist, 1886-1946) while "the desire to write grows with writing" (Desiderius Erasmus, Dutch humanist, 1466?-1536).

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Suggested Additional Reading

Raimes, A. (1983). *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

An excellent resource book directed toward ESL writing, but with enough emphasis on early-stage learners to be useful also in the foreign language curriculum, it contains many sample writing tasks as well as practical suggestions for managing writing activities in the second language classroom.

Prince, E. (1990). *Write Soon! A Beginning Text for ESL Writers*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan.

In this highly readable text the author demonstrates how to break the writing process into manageable parts, building toward a goal.

Curtain, H.A. & Pesola, C.A. (1994). *Languages and Children—Making the Match*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Although written primarily for teachers of foreign languages in the elementary school, this book includes a variety of concrete examples of very early-stage transcription-oriented tasks that are both communicative and readily adaptable to older learners.

Hedge, T. (1988). *Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The author has compiled a variety of writing tasks in a clear, very teacher-friendly format. Each task is defined by language level and topic, with step-by-step procedures to follow in class.

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Appendix A

What undergraduates say they read (listed in alphabetical order)

advertisements
bills (telephone, VISA™, power, tuition)
blackboards, bulletin boards (electronic and other), billboards
books (non-fiction and fiction, including textbooks)
catalogs
cereal boxes and other packages
charts, graphs, tables
class notes
comics
computer games, files, windows, manuals
course packs
dictionaries
e-mail
exam questions
forms and applications
graffiti
instructions
jokes and riddles
journal (research) articles
labels
letters (correspondence, personal and business)
libretti (for operas)
magazine articles
memos
menus
news group postings
newspapers (articles, editorials, letters to the editor, advice columns, personals, want ads, film and restaurant reviews)
pamphlets, flyers, brochures
phone messages
plays
poems
posters
puzzles (crossword, word search, logic puzzles)
recipes
religious texts, prayers
riddles and jokes
role play and game handbooks (Dungeons and Dragons™, Warhammer™, Vampire™)
shopping lists
short stories
song lyrics
street signs
subtitles (in foreign films)
T-shirts
telephone directories
TV guide
World Wide Web pages

Appendix B

Examples of how to expand categories for MindReader transcription task

Topic categories

a fruit
a red fruit
a red summer fruit
a red summer fruit that you eat with your fingers

a part of the body
a part of the body that is above the shoulders
a part of the body above the shoulders and of which you have two

a room in the house
a quiet room in the house
a quiet room in the house where people like to read

Sociolinguistic categories

a second language greeting
a second language greeting used in a formal context
a second language greeting used in a formal context after 7:00 pm

a commonly-used second language expression
a one-word compliment
a one-word compliment used in regard to food

Content categories

a city
a city in a country where the target language is the primary language
a city in X region of a country where the target language is the primary language

a dialect of the second language
a southern dialect of the second language
a southern dialect of the second language that has a strong literary tradition

Personal categories

a relative
a favorite relative
a favorite female relative

what students most like to do
what students most like to do on Saturday mornings
what students most like to do on Saturday mornings with their friends

Appendix C

Sample journal entries from three different first semester learners of Spanish

Example A

(Student's entry) I like [wrong person of verb] much of my classes this [wrong agreement] semester [wrong construction; either "I like my classes a lot" or "I like many of my classes"]. The books for my advertising [word in English] class for example, are very interesting [missing adjective agreement]. My books on economics are very fascinating [missing adjective agreement], too. The books for Spanish are easy [missing diacritic; missing agreement] understand [missing preposition]. But I believe that one of the books for Spanish isn't really necessary.

(Teacher's comment) Is it boring?

(Student's entry continues) Next week I have two exams [misspelled] in my economics classes. This week I have to [missing "que"] study. Economics is a difficult class understand [missing preposition] sometimes. It is a business class. It is also [missing diacritic] my specialty in the faculty of Arts and Sciences [literal translation from English].

(Teacher's comment) What type of work would you like to do in the future?

Appendix C continues on next page

Example B

(Student's entry) How are you? Fine, thank you.

The student is writing [wrong verb ending] the paper.

You want to speak Spanish.

You dance well.

We sing a lot.

You all wish to buy the books.

She studies French.

(Teacher's comment) [none]

Example C

(Student's entry) My family is very small [missing adjective agreement], but very close [wrong word: should be 'unida']. My father is a [unnecessary use of article] physical education teacher at/in [wrong word; should be "en"] a secondary [misspelled, misused accent] school. My mother teaches [misspelled; should be "enseña"] special education in the same school [misspelled]. My brother Gary is sixteen [missing diacritic], and he plays [missing preposition] football, basketball, and baseball. My sister Allison is eight and she likes gymnastics [wrong word: should be "gimnástica"].

(Teacher's comment) [correction of all grammatical and lexical errors]

Appendix D

Student writing sample from Person Description activity

First attempt:
Ha capelli biondi. E' giovane. E' statura mezza. E' magra. E' una donna.

[She has blond hair. She is young. She is medium height. She is skinny. It is a woman.]

Other students' comments:
"bionda" = "ha i capelli biondi"; "giovane" non è utile; se dici "bionda, magra" non è necessario dire "è una donna"

["blonde" = "has blond hair"; "young" isn't useful; if you say "blonde, skinny" (with gender agreement on the adjectives) it isn't necessary to say "it's a woman"]

Revised version:
E' bionda. Ha 20-30 anni. E' statura mezza. E' magra.

[She is blonde, 20-30 years old. She's medium height. She's skinny.]

Teacher's comments:
Per gli Italiani è "alta," non di statura media. E' meglio dire "snella" (invece di "magra"): "magra" dà un'impressione negativa, "snella" è positiva.

[For Italians she is "tall," not medium height (correct form given). It is better to say "slender" (instead of "skinny"); "skinny" is negative, "slender" is positive.]

The Teaching of Culture in Foreign Language Courses

Dale L. Lange
University of Minnesota

one of a series of modules for the

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

What Is Culture? 3

- The belles-lettres or fine arts perspective 3
- The social sciences perspective 4
- The foreign language education perspective 5

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Culture Learning 6

- Establishing expected outcomes for the learning of culture 7
- Determining cultural content 9
- Teaching culture 13
- Assessing culture learning 20

Treatment of Culture in Language Textbooks 22

Conclusion 24

References 27

Suggested Additional Reading 33

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Introduction

My purpose in this module is to broaden the concept of culture in language teaching beyond the focus traditionally found in college and university foreign language departments. The usual practice has been to adopt a belletristic approach, emphasizing the "high culture" of arts and letters. The broader approach which I advocate here is motivated by and includes the work of the behavioral and social scientists, who have shown how culture pervades every aspect of our lives. Moreover, it is in keeping with two current trends in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. First, the new national standards for the teaching of foreign languages from kindergarten through twelfth grade incorporate an extended understanding of culture (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; Lafayette, 1996). Second, many university foreign language departments are restructuring their programs to meet the interests of students who seek to use a foreign language in wider, interdisciplinary contexts (Berman et al., 1996).

I will consider the following topics in this discussion: defining the concept of culture, establishing expected outcomes for the learning of culture, determining the cultural content of language courses, teaching culture, and assessing cultural learning. I will also briefly examine three college foreign language textbooks within the frame of reference established in earlier sections. At appropriate intervals, I will provide study questions for you to talk about with fellow teaching assistants and other colleagues. The module ends with suggested readings in which you can explore certain topics in greater depth.

What Is Culture?

Defining culture poses significant problems for those, including this writer, who attempt it, largely because of its complexity. There is not one definition that covers the concept completely. Academic inquiry from several disciplines offers differing perspectives on the meaning of culture, two of which are presented here: the belles-lettres or fine arts tradition and the social sciences view. The section ends with the foreign language education perspective, raising questions about what the learning of culture means in the context of learning a language.

The belles-lettres or fine arts perspective

Brooks (1960) referred to the belletristic perspective of culture as "refinement," referencing the best in mind, taste, and manners and including mankind's highest intellectual attainments as embodied in the fine arts (painting, sculpture, dance, music) and literature. This traditional perspective, with its emphasis on "high culture" (as opposed to "popular culture"), continues to exist in college and university foreign language departments because the academy purposefully intends to represent the culture's highest achievements. There may be another reason as well. The emphasis on high culture lends greater intellectual status to the language and literature department, elevating it above the ranks of language teaching institutes.

The social sciences perspective on culture (discussed in more detail below), although lacking the long history of the belletristic perspective, nevertheless has come to exert considerable influence. It is not uncommon to find the two perspectives in contention within the same language department. The tension between these two views is well illustrated in Steele and Suozzo's (1994) reference work on the teaching of French culture. On the one hand, they state that "The affirmation of popular culture throughout the seventies and eighties was clearly a compelling necessity" (p. 101). But the authors continue their discussion by pointing out what they see as a potential danger of too much emphasis on popular culture: the reduction of cultural data to "tourist information" or a kind of "simplistic folklore" (pp. 101-102). As a final validation of their argument for more emphasis on high culture, the authors assert "Furthermore, the French themselves have always accorded a special place to high culture—which they normally call *civilisation*—in their own self-assessment and self-valorization. To ignore high culture would require us to refuse to define the French fully, for it would be disregarding a key element of their overall culture" (p. 102).

As you can see, the definition of culture can be an emotional issue. However, it is useful to remember that there is wide variety among language learners, and they are found in language programs from kindergarten to graduate school, as well as outside academe. These learners do not all have the same needs. You may wish to consult other sources on this matter: Berman et al. (1996); Kramsch (1993, 1994); and Krueger and Ryan (1993).

The social sciences perspective

Again, Brooks (1960) has probably best characterized the social sciences perspective on culture, which he defines as "the sum of all the learned and shared elements that characterize a societal group" (p. 80). In other words, culture is the "total way of life of the group" (p. 80). Each person belongs to several cultures simultaneously (the larger societal group, community, work, and home as examples), whose patterns are learned more implicitly than explicitly. Culture includes a value system and practiced ways of believing and of behaving, most of which are informally learned. Other aspects include shared knowledge of meanings, events, products, and actions (Byram, 1989; Hall, 1966). Language provides the means for understanding, sharing, and negotiating meaning for all aspects of culture and is itself an aspect of culture (Sapir, 1964). Thus the social sciences conceptualization of culture embraces the belles-lettres perspective and extends it to include language, values, behavior patterns, events, and products—including the products of high culture. This overlap in concept and inquiry between the belletristic and social sciences approaches to culture makes it possible to accommodate both high culture and popular culture in the same course. Other resources on this issue for you to explore are Damen (1987, pp. 73-96) and Seelye (1994, pp. 14-25).

Social sciences contributing to a broader understanding of culture and its impact on language include sociolinguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, and social psychology.

Sociolinguistics studies how language varies within its social or cultural context, investigating the importance of that context in communicative interactions. Sociolinguists examine how discourse is affected by the interlocutors' individual status (age, sex, educational level, ethnic group, geographical origin), roles in relation to each other (parent-child, doctor-patient, salesperson-customer, more intimate relationships), and social status (social standing, power, authority). Sociolinguists also investigate the development and variability in learners' language (called *interlanguage*) as they learn a second language within a cultural context. Interlanguage studies explore not only the factors of individual status, roles, and social status, but also the contributions of the first language to the development of competence in the second. Useful resources on this subject are: Fearing (1954); Moorjani and Field (1988); Preston (1989); Pride (1979); Spolsky (1989); and Tarone (1988).

In **psychology**, the work of Triandis et al. (1972) demonstrates how individuals' culturally determined view of the world clashes with other world views. An individual's subjective reality may not match the subjective reality resulting from another social environment. Stark contrasts in subjective realities can cause culture shock, a kind of psychological disorientation brought about by the lack of a familiar context (Furnham and Bochner, 1989), and may have an effect on language learning (Clark, 1976). Originally thought of in a "disease" mode (Oberg, 1960), culture shock is now looked upon as having positive benefits for the individual (Bu, 1995). Two other psychological variables that may affect the learning of another language and culture are attitudes and motivation. These are discussed in Gardner and Lambert (1972).

Psycholinguistics studies the processes used in language learning and language use (Titone and Danesi, 1985). Among the many topics explored by psycholinguistics is the examination of discourse patterns in the classroom to understand how variations in the context affect the language learning process. For example, Chaudron's (1988) analysis of teacher and student interaction in ESL classrooms demonstrates how largely teacher-oriented discourse patterns influence the learning of a second language within the culture of the classroom. Other examples are case studies by Guthrie (1987) of the effect of teacher discourse on learning in postsecondary French courses and methods by which the development of discourse can be examined in the classroom (van Lier, 1988).

In **social psychology**, one focus is the study of how society and its composition affect the learners' language development and behavior. Gardner (1985) has created a model which takes into consideration four classes of variables in second language learning: the social milieu, individual learner differences, contexts where language acquisition takes place (e.g., classroom or street), and outcomes (language, values, behavior, attitudes). One of the concerns of the model is the attitude expressed within the social milieu toward a second language, its cultural context, and language learning. Other social psychology models of language learning and acquisition concerned with similar issues are Giles et al. (1977); Lambert (1975); and Schumann (1978).

There is enormous overlap in the research of the social science disciplines into the characteristics of the learner, language learning, and the cultural milieu(x) where the language is used to communicate. Much work in these areas is currently being discussed under the category of language acquisition, focusing on the interaction of teacher and learner in the classroom. See Freed (1991); Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991); and Richards and Lockhart (1994).

The foreign language education perspective

Although a strong grammatical orientation in language teaching has traditionally dominated the content of language programs, more recently, various communicative approaches have emerged. In these approaches, language has personal and social functions. This makes the teaching of culture a requirement, rather than a refinement. No longer can it sit ignored outside the classroom door, or be included when there is "nothing else to do."

While the social sciences have broadened our perspective on culture and provided us with much new information on the complex interactions of culture and language, they cannot answer the question of that the *learning* of culture means, especially in the context of learning a language. Ultimately, it is the foreign language course designers, textbook writers, and teachers who must decide what culture means and what aspects of a particular culture to present in a particular course.

The question remains enormously complicated. It is not just the recognition of the dichotomy of "culture with a capital *C*" (high culture) and "culture with a small *c*" (...all the learned and shared elements...). Learning culture in the context of learning a language can mean acquiring a body of knowledge—formal, analytical learning about the nature, structure, and contributions of a particular culture. The learning of culture can also be experiential; it can be perceptional; and it can be inherently personal (Damen, 1987; Seelye, 1994). Yet most important to this discussion is that language is involved in every aspect of culture.

The following questions will prompt you to think through your own position on this complicated issue.

Culture and Language Learning

How do you define culture? Why do you define it in that way?

What is the relationship of culture and language? Why is that relationship important?

Is a "language and culture studies" program the best way to deal with the relationship of language and culture in postsecondary education? Why or why not?

Why is culture important to language learning? Can you think of any problems that may result from studying a language apart from its cultural context?

If a textbook writer chooses to emphasize "high culture" in the design of the materials, what effect will this have on the presentation of the language?

If a textbook writer uses a social sciences perspective in the treatment of culture, what features of culture might be included? How would this perspective affect the presentation of the language?

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Culture Learning

Before determining a curriculum and deciding on the related questions of how to teach and assess what is learned, there are four very important questions that need to be asked of those who would include culture as the content or one overall goal of language learning programs at the college or university level:

1. What should students in a language program know and understand, perceive, experience, and internalize about the culture(s) of the language being studied?

2. What should the students be able to do with that knowledge and those understandings, perceptions, experiences, and internalizations?

3. Are the language and the culture taught in tandem? Is culture taught as facts, or is it taught as process to reflect the changing nature and complexity of culture? Is language taught and learned in that process?

4. What kinds of assessments can be applied in these areas so that students can demonstrate their cultural abilities?

In this section, I will discuss curriculum, teaching, and assessment. The planning of curriculum is largely concerned with establishing expected outcomes and determining course content. Teaching includes the strategies, broadly conceived, by which we engage students to attain the expected outcomes. Assessment (implying greater breadth than the term "testing") consists of the techniques used to evaluate the results of the teaching and learning in the course.

Establishing expected outcomes for the learning of culture

Much of the folklore on the learning of culture suggests that it is learned (by osmosis?) during the process of acquiring a language. Fortunately, that folklore is being supplanted with the realization that all learning has to be planned. Seelye (1994, p. 29) asserts that "Cultural instruction must be purposeful if it is to lead anywhere." If the learning of language has to be planned, so does the learning of culture. We must establish the expected outcomes for culture learning.

There are several forces at work shaping our ideas of appropriate outcomes for the learning of culture. We have already seen that foreign language departments have increasingly adopted a social sciences perspective on culture. The shift to this point of view was driven first by the emergence of audiolingual language teaching in the 1960s and more recently by the growing influence of communicative language teaching.

As a result of other recent changes, college and university language departments are undergoing a "paradigm shift" which challenges longstanding assumptions about the reasons for which languages are studied and the role of culture learning. "Whereas the focal point for American foreign language education in the past has typically been literary criticism, language departments today are increasingly occupied with linking languages to the pursuits of other fields, for example, to business, science, and engineering" (Grandin, Einbeck, and von Reinhart, 1992, p. 124; see also Kramsch, 1993, 1994). This new approach, variously referred to as languages for specific purposes, content-based instruction, and foreign languages across the curriculum, results in foreign language programs that are more discipline based. There is a concomitant shift in focus from literary studies to cultural studies—a multidisciplinary orientation to the study of a cultural area (German, French, or Hispanic Studies). In this context, the foreign language becomes a major tool for discovering new information, opening the way for language study to concentrate on meaning rather than form.

Yet another force that is shaping expectations of appropriate outcomes for culture learning is the standards movement in the elementary and secondary schools of this country. Several standards-setting projects give evidence of the national attention now focused on the learning of culture within the context of foreign language learning in kindergarten through grade 12. The NSFLEP (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) and the AATG (American Association of Teachers of German, 1997) standards, for example, include culture learning among their five goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections (to other disciplines) Comparisons (of languages and cultures), and Communities (at home and around the world). The standards developed by the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) incorporate a model for culture learning which can be used for any language (Singerman, 1996). In all these national projects, culture is viewed from the broader perspective of the social sciences. Moreover, the culture is viewed as constantly changing, thus requiring as part of culture learning a process for constantly reviewing one's understanding of the culture.

Many of the states are following the lead of the national projects. (See as examples *Foreign Languages: Ohio's Model Competency-Based Program*, 1996; and *The Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework*, 1995). They have incorporated the same five goal areas in their state standards documents to guide local school districts in developing performance objectives and assessments in grades K-12. In all of these statements, there are strong recommendations for culture learning, especially learning that goes beyond simply learning cultural information.

While this attention to planning and assessing performance in culture learning has not had a direct impact on the colleges and universities, there is an indirect effect that will ultimately be felt. Language instructors (and teaching assistants) will need to understand how graduates of secondary school programs are prepared to function in culture. Students will be and are already entering college and university programs with more clearly demonstrable abilities in culture learning than in previous generations, and they need to continue their learning in a seamless way.

It will become increasingly necessary to align college and university objectives for language and culture learning with those of the secondary schools. (See Kramsch, 1995; replies by Byrnes, 1995, and Bernhardt, 1995; a reply by Kramsch, 1995; and Lange, 1997.) Without close connections in colleges and universities to what is taking place in K-12 education, neither the schools nor the postsecondary institutions will help students to achieve a working competence in a foreign language and its culture. Three models suggested to resolve the problem of articulation between secondary schools and colleges and universities are found in projects at the University of Minnesota (Metcalf, 1995), Ohio State University (Birckbichler, 1995), and the University of Wisconsin (Sandrock, 1995).

Determining cultural content

There are a variety of ways to determine the cultural content of language learning programs. Some writers have advocated an approach which treats cultural content as knowledge, focusing on facts and information about the culture. Others propose models that allow examination of beliefs, values, and culturally conditioned images, and of the effect of social and situational variables on roles and behavior. Such models encourage students to explore, analyze, and evaluate features of the target culture. Several schemes for selecting and organizing cultural content are examined below.

Acquiring a body of knowledge

Nostrand (1967, 1978) has developed a taxonomy into which he has categorized cultural themes—"emotionally charged concerns" which are motivational or which have value for the individual. The resulting model intends to represent a cultural value system. In the Emergent Model, as it is called, there are six large categories (the culture, the society and its institutions, conflicts, ecology and technology, the individual, and the cross-cultural environment) under which may be classified as many as thirty topics covering relevant themes. For example, under the heading "the culture" we find: main themes, ethos or national character, assumptions about reality, verifiable knowledge, art forms, language, and paralanguage and kinesics. Basically, the model describes a culture and serves as a source of information about its values. The Emergent Model is the basis for the recommendations of the AATF National Commission on Cultural Competence (Singerman, 1996).

Setting goals and objectives

Seelye (1994, as well as two earlier editions in 1974 and 1985) makes an extremely important contribution to the development of the content of language and culture programs by setting goals and objectives for culture learning. The primary goal is stated as follows:

> All students will develop the cultural understandings, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture. (p. 29)

The six supporting objectives (p. 31) are summarized below with the key word in bold type. The many chapters of Seelye's book show how these goals can be implemented.

1. **Interest**: Students show curiosity about another culture and empathy toward its members.
2. **Who**: Students recognize that age, sex, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.

3. **What**: Students realize that effective communication requires discovering the cultural images that are evoked in the minds of people when they think, act, and react to the world around them.
4. **Where and When**: Students recognize that situations and conventions shape behavior in important ways.
5. **Why**: Students understand that people act as they do because they are using allowed societal options to satisfy basic physical and psychological needs.
6. **Exploration**: Students evaluate generalizations about the target culture in terms of the evidence to substantiate them. Students have the skills to locate and organize information about the culture from a variety of sources—library, mass media, people, and personal observation.

These statements include a variety of contents: curiosity, place of roles and social variables, culturally conditioned images, situational variables and conventions, cultural patterns, and evaluation processes. They are quite different from a focus on facts and information about a culture as in the Nostrand Emergent Model or the AATF Commission recommendations for culture content.

Integrating language and culture

Many times culture is treated as an afterthought in a language learning program. However, Stern (1983) taught us to think about four interwoven syllabi in the language learning process: language, culture, communication, and general language education (learning how to learn) would all be integrated with one another. Culture, like language, would have its own defined content, progression, and levels of competency.

Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) have pushed Stern's idea of the integration of culture into language programs into a realizable process where culture and language are equal partners. Their approach to culture learning comprises eight interactive stages conducted jointly by teacher and students in a loose progression:

1. choice of a cultural theme;
2. presentation of the theme through a wide variety of means (pictures, bulletin boards, slides, films, videotape, live interviews, etc.);
3. dialogue to elicit student perceptions of the theme and to exemplify it;
4. clarification of language learning needs (i.e., what language functions, notions, structures, syntax, registers, and vocabulary are needed to pursue the theme?);
5. presentation and practice of language learning aspects together with cultural phenomena appropriate for the theme;
6. verification or rejection of student perceptions (see 3) through the examination of a variety of different sources;
7. examination of cultural awareness through questions which contrast target and native cultures, analyze language used, and explore the importance of context, gender, time,

class, and race in order that students articulate the process(es) they experienced in verifying perceptions; and

8. evaluation of language and cultural proficiency through the use of language and presentational strategies to demonstrate awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the culture.

Using a process approach

What level of proficiency in the target culture should we expect our students to attain? Is it enough for them to have an appreciation and intellectual understanding of the culture? Or should they strive toward the goal of empathy with and integration into the culture? Allen (1985) addresses the concept of cultural proficiency. She argues that students not become French, German, or Hispanic, but that they acquire an awareness of and appreciation for another culture. Allen believes that awareness and appreciation of another culture are achieved through progressive student discovery in three content categories: information, experience, and authenticity. In each category there is a progression. For information, from isolated facts to cultural patterns; for experience, from survival to the gradual incorporation of social and professional dimensions of the culture; and for authenticity, from the concrete (e.g., the tourist environment) to the abstract (e.g., the development of empathy). Development is accomplished in all three categories through the acquisition and use of behaviors, knowledge, and skills, leading to a comparative process through which learners can understand another culture as well as their own.

In further development along these lines, Allen and Lange (1996) have articulated a *process* approach for culture learning. Within thematic categories (survival, social, and socio-professional), four phases of a recurring process (observation, exploration, expansion, and evaluation) provide learners with opportunity to use language in culture learning.

- In the observation phase, thematic cultural phenomena from both C_1 (the students' culture) and C_2 (the target culture) are examined, identified as useful, and described in detail. Students' reactions to the phenomena are also recorded.
- In exploration, learners compare and contrast the C_1/C_2 phenomena and examine their original perceptions as well. Hypotheses to account for the phenomena in both cultures are formulated and more information is gathered.
- In expansion, learners examine new data, describe what has been found, adding to the original observations and perceptions, and refine the original hypotheses for C_1 and C_2.
- In evaluation, learners analyze and synthesize information on the theme across both cultures, confirm or reject their original hypotheses, and examine their original perceptions to see if they need to change as well.

The importance of the Allen (1985) and the Allen and Lange (1996) contributions is that they include the contrast of cultural knowledge as an important element of content in the learning of both C_1 and C_2. In particular, the Allen and Lange process provides the students experience with the contrasts while they are coming to understand them. Moreover, it integrates language and culture learning, with language being learned through cultural experience.

Developing cultural sensitivity

Taking an intercultural studies perspective, Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (1996) have proposed a model for development of cultural sensitivity as the content of culture learning. The six stages of the model are classified under two rubrics: ethnocentric (denial, defense, and minimization) and ethnorelative (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). The ethnocentric stages are defined as follows:

> Denial of difference is the inability of the individual to recognize cultural differences because the constructs to which the differences refer are not part of the individual's repertoire; thus, the differences are denied. "As long as we speak the same language, there's no problem."
>
> Defense against difference operates when the individual sees differences but evaluates them negatively through overt stereotyping. "How stupid to say 'grandmother' in that way. Our way is better!"
>
> In the minimization of difference, the individual sees superficial cultural differences but wants to minimize those differences by suggesting that "Deep down, we are all the same no matter where we are from."

The ethnorelative stages are described as follows:

> In the acceptance of difference stage, individuals appreciate cultural difference and acknowledge that other cultures provide alternative resolutions to human existence. "The more difference the better—more difference equals more creative ideas!" In this stage, individuals can understand cultural phenomena within context and elaborate on them.
>
> In adaptation to difference, individuals have the ability to see through the eyes of the "other," and to develop the communication skills necessary to communicate with the "other." "The more I understand this culture, the better I get at the language."
>
> In the final stage, integration of difference, individuals find themselves in the process of creating an adaptable identity, not based on any one culture, which allows them to evaluate situations from a "multiple" perspective and communicate constructively with the "other." "Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of view." This latter stage would probably be difficult to attain in the classroom.

The contribution of the Bennett, Bennett, and Allen model is that from it, individuals can develop cultural sensitivity. It is possible to observe this development take place in ways similar to cognitive or language development. Thus, we can plan for, teach toward, and evaluate such development. Moreover, it is potentially possible to place many of the other approaches to cultural content that have been discussed here, as well as many of the instructional strategies to be discussed below, within the frame of this model.

The following questions will lead you to think about the appropriate cultural content for a language course.

Cultural Content for Language Courses

If you were to order in importance the ways in which cultural content in language courses may be selected and organized, how would you order the following (1 = most important, 5 = least important:

- development of goals
- knowledge about the culture
- ways of learning about the culture
- integration of language and culture
- multiculturalism
- development of cultural sensitivity

Why have you ordered them in that way? Why these preferences?

What particular bias(es) do they indicate? Why these biases?

Why would you give or not give preference to the development of goals as the most important determiner of the cultural content of a language and culture program?

What cultural goals would you choose to include in a language learning course? Why?

Which would you exclude? Why?

Teaching culture

This section will treat the teaching of culture from two complementary perspectives. The discussion of teaching culture as information will show how information may be conveyed through lectures and other devices such as culture capsules, culture clusters, cultural incidents and assimilators, and cultural minidramas. The discussion of integrating language and culture as process will examine the process of refinement of hypotheses about cultural themes.

Teaching culture as information

Probably the easiest way in which to impart information on any subject in college and university studies is to tell students what they should know. In the history of college teaching, this approach goes back to the Middle Ages and still is used today. As in many disciplines, the lecture is used to give information on culture, whether in large or small classes. The instructor imparts cultural information, usually in the students' native language. Students take notes. Once the notes have been taken, it is believed, the cultural knowledge has been learned. Tests are developed, administered, and scored to verify the learning. Grades are given as indicators of who has the most cultural knowledge. This is an efficient and cost-effective system, and it is a system which has enormous credibility. If you "teach culture" in this way, some of the following guidelines could make it very productive:

1. Keep the lecture in the target language.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Make it informative.
4. Integrate it into the daily lesson.
5. Focus it on a specific targeted aspect of culture.
6. Give it humor.
7. Illustrate it with pictures, charts, slides, and authentic objects.
8. Follow up with a debriefing using questions in the target language.

Other kinds of devices for giving information have been created which allow students a more active role. These are capsules, clusters, incidents and assimilators, and minidramas. These instructional forms are largely text based and are constructed with a core cultural item or items. Each may be easily developed but should be reviewed by other instructors in order to verify the information in them and ensure that the expected responses are valid. An added advantage of using these devices is that students may be involved in both the research and writing of them. The devices are discussed below.

Culture capsules. This strategy is based on a minimal contrast (C_1/C_2) of features in the students' culture and the target culture. This contrast can be described in a paragraph or two in the target language (L_2) with as much detail as possible, keeping in mind the proficiency level of the students. It is a good idea to accompany the text with drawings, pictures, or other authentic objects to illustrate the contrast. Simple and more advanced versions of the same contrast can be used as students become more proficient in the language. The capsule can be used as material for listening or reading comprehension and then as the basis for communicative activities such as question and answer practice; simple rewriting or retelling of the content; oral or written stories about one's self, family, or friends; letters to a pen pal (classmate), the basis for a short research project; or a description of reactions to the contrast. The capsule can also be used in small groups to generate skits or role plays. Any activity should relate to the contrast of C_1/C_2 and use the L_2 as much as possible. Certainly, one of the final activities should be a summary of what students have learned from the capsule and the ensuing activities. For further references on the development and use of culture capsules, see Omaggio-Hadley (1993), Seelye (1994), and Taylor and Sorenson (1961). Commercially prepared culture capsules are available as models which instructors can adapt to their own purposes. See Miller and Bishop (1979); Miller, Drayton, and Lyon (1979); and Miller and Loiseau (1974).

Culture clusters. In presenting simple contrasts in single culture capsules, there is a danger of unwittingly creating stereotypes. In order to avoid such stereotyping, Meade and Morain (1973) developed the concept of culture clusters, which involve anywhere from two to four culture capsules. They show contrasts between C_1 and C_2 in two to four aspects of the same topic, thus allowing for presentation of more information than with a single culture capsule. As with a single capsule, clusters can be accompanied by any kind of illustration—pictures, slides, objects, even people who could provide information or participate in a simulation dramatizing the information in the cluster. Again, the L_2 is used as much as possible.

To develop culture clusters, Seelye (1994) suggests that one think about some particular aspect of life in the target culture that could include two to four segments. Each segment is then clarified through a culture capsule. Finally, the capsules may be turned into a simulation for presentation. Students could even help write the capsules. Any of the activities suggested above for the single culture capsule may be used for clusters as well. See Seelye (1994) for other examples.

Cultural incidents and assimilators. This concept was developed by learning psychologists (Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis, 1971) to prepare individuals to function in cross-cultural or intercultural contexts. Culture assimilators apply behavioral psychology to cross-cultural communication through programmed learning. The key elements of culture assimilators are cultural incidents or specific intercultural interactions which seem to puzzle the participants, who are from two different cultures (see examples in Seelye, 1994). Each incident motivates analysis and explanation. After the description of the incident, four plausible explanations or distractors are offered, one of which is more plausible than the others. With each choice, the reader is given feedback on the chosen answer and is redirected to the text to understand why the choice is correct or not correct. Further, a separate extended explanation may also help clarify the situation beyond the distractor feedback. An assimilator, which may be a compilation of 50 to 100 cultural incidents, can be prepared so that it covers some of the major cultural miscommunications that might happen within a culture. An example would be the cultural assimilator for Honduras (Symonds et al., 1967) as cited in Seelye (1994).

As with culture capsules and clusters, the descriptions of incidents may be written in L_2. Assimilators encourage language use by both individuals and groups. Individual students can read them (or listen to them, if they are recorded) as both language input and cultural information. If advanced enough in language proficiency, with guidance students might write about incidents from their own intercultural experiences. Groups might also create incidents, tell their own stories to one another, or develop a skit based on some experience(s) with

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miscommunication. The main activity is probably the assimilator itself, or parts of it, as it fits into the cultural goals for the course. But you should not hesitate to experiment and use the assimilator as creatively as possible.

Although culture assimilators may actively involve the learner and may be enjoyable and effective in explaining miscommunication, they require care in writing so as not to convey misleading information. Whether you create your own incidents or use students' experiences as the basis for writing them, native speakers should be asked to validate the miscommunication being depicted.

Cultural minidramas. As in the culture assimilator, the problem central to the cultural minidrama is that of miscommunication. However, in the minidrama, there are up to five episodes consisting of skits or simulations. Each episode contains an example, or maybe more than one, where problems of communication lead to misunderstanding. The precise cause of the miscommunication is not revealed until the last episode. After each episode, a neutral discussion between students and teacher provides students with the opportunity of "self-confrontation." To force the confrontation, the teacher might ask both broad questions ("What do you think about this episode?") and narrow ones ("Is there miscommunication in this episode?"). Both the discussion and the experience of the minidrama provide students with the opportunity to encounter the sometimes deceptive nature of intercultural communication through a series of steps until the cause of the miscommunication is revealed.

In terms of classroom use, the best practice for language input and listening or reading comprehension would be through the presentation and discussion of the episodes in the L_2. However, best practice may sometimes not be possible, particularly if the minidrama is used with first or second semester learners. Both the broad and narrow questions for the end-of-episode discussions should be designed so that students could answer them in L_2, allowing for some focused language practice, but also providing learners with a relatively free and open opportunity to express themselves. Of course, students could work in groups in order to develop responses to discussion questions. Most importantly, the minidrama is an activity where students can put their intellectual, cultural, and language abilities together in order to figure out what the communication problem really is. Seelye (1994) has excellent examples of cultural minidramas.

Each of these four devices for learning culture adds to students' information about the C_2. Here are some questions for you to consider regarding their use.

Devices for Learning Culture

culture capsules • culture clusters • cultural incidents and assimilators
cultural minidramas

For what kinds of cultural learning objectives might you use any of these four devices?

What possibilities for learning of language and culture can these devices provide that lecturing cannot?

Is/are any of the devices better suited for some kinds of culture learning than others? What about language learning?

Can you think of any practical limitations on the use of any of the devices? Consider the resources needed to support each device, the demands placed on students' language proficiency, and other factors.

Think about the textbook and other instructional materials with which you are currently teaching. In what ways and at what points in the lesson could you use these devices for the teaching and learning of culture?

Integrating language and culture as process: hypothesis refinement

Much credit goes to Seelye (1994) for the concept of "hypothesis refinement," which is largely contained in "Exploration," the sixth of his supporting objectives (pp. 141-161). Jorstad (1981), Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), and Allen and Lange (1996) have significantly embellished this idea. Jorstad (1981) provides a six-step process in which hypothesis refinement is a primarily cognitive process (Bloom, 1956) accomplished in L_1.

Adding to this cognitive-domain process, Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) include the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964), thereby admitting to the process the concept of valuing, an appreciation of value systems, and the development of a personal value system. In addition, their seven-step approach to hypothesis refinement integrates the learning of language as part of culture learning. In their process, students:

1. form perceptions of a feature of the culture;
2. state their perceptions;
3. seek multiple sources for information on the statement (media, print, realia);
4. examine and analyze the information from the sources;
5. modify the original statement and seek further data for refinement;
6. examine a related feature in their own culture using the same process; and

7. compare the refined statement about their own culture with the statement about the related feature in the C_2.

Allen and Lange (1996) go one step further in making hypothesis refinement a recursive, cognitive and affective, developmental process linked to thematic material from both the C_1 and C_2. This addition brings the hypothesis refinement and language learning process closer to the development of specific materials for culture and language learning in the classroom.

Hypothesis refinement, a composite instructional strategy for dealing with culture and even language learning, contains many sub-strategies which can be used within the several hypothesis refinement frameworks just discussed. The strategies are used largely to gather information. Yet, how that information is used is important as well. Five of those information gathering strategies and their uses are treated below, namely the use of observation, artifacts, interviews, documents, and literary texts.

Observation. Students learn to focus actively on what they see. Observing any object, photograph, drawing, painting, slide, bulletin board display, film, videotape, videodisc, or audiotape, they are guided by careful questioning to describe what they see. The description could be given orally or in written form and in either L_1 or L_2; even beginners can give simple descriptions in L_2. Here are some sample questions to guide students with observation. The questions also include affect as an element:

What do you see?
What are the details?
How are these details different from your experience?
What is your reaction to the details and the differences from your experience?

These questions prompt students to observe carefully, describe in detail, and then state reactions to what is observed and described, based on some awareness of and experience with the object. The discussion of the observations can be accomplished in small groups, which allows for a variation of description and reaction, showing that cultural perceptions can differ.

Cultural artifacts. The use of a cultural artifact (any unfamiliar object) fits directly into hypothesis refinement through observation, description, and reaction. Following a description elicited by questions like those just suggested, further questions such as the following will help develop a hypothesis:

How was this object constructed? By whom? When?
For what purpose or function in this culture?
Who uses it in this culture?
What is its broader meaning in this culture?
Can you find it in your own culture?

Does it serve the same purpose?
Does it have the same meaning?

Notice that the teacher is not required to know everything about this artifact or this culture! Students are asked to do cognitive and affective intellectual work that helps them experience this culture in their own classroom.

Interviews of native speakers on a particular theme or topic provide perceptions of the theme from a culturally individualistic perspective. It is important that instructors and students prepare for such interviews in advance. Students might develop questions on the theme in the L_2, based on their experience, impressions, and perceptions of the topic at that point. Interviews can take place in the classroom in a whole group setting or, if more than one native speaker is interviewed at a time, in smaller groups. Interviews should be recorded if possible to allow students to confirm their understanding during follow-up activities. After the interview has taken place, students work in groups, analyzing the information obtained from the interview and using it to revise their earlier hypotheses. The tape(s) of the interview(s) should be preserved for later use by other classes.

Documents of a wide variety can be used as information from the C_1 or C_2 for contrastive and comparative use, depending on the theme. The documents can range from magazine ads to charts, graphs, and schedules, to newspapers and magazines, to any kind of document that fits the theme and the imagination of the teacher and students. In gathering information on a cultural theme, students should be encouraged to examine a wide variety of sources, which are then analyzed to provide a composite picture. For example, on the topic of alternative medicine in French culture, ads of all kinds, cartoons, articles in popular magazines and newspapers, brochures, slides, etc., provide a variety of data. From these documents a hypothesis as to the use of alternative medicine in French culture can be refined or a comparison/contrast be made with U.S. culture. Many of the more formal types of reference materials may be found in libraries, and libraries and language departments usually subscribe to some of the standard popular magazines and newspapers, so sources could be available if sought out.

Literary texts are certainly sources of information on cultural behavior patterns and values. Galloway (1992) offers a four-stage process (thinking, looking, learning, integrating) for reading authentic texts which relates to hypothesis refinement models.

> Thinking: Students bring out the cultural schema for C_1, which can be used as the backdrop for thinking about C_2.
>
> Looking: Students examine the structure and function of the text to notice how the major features of the text may contribute to its meaning. Example: What is the title of the text? What is its possible meaning? Why does this text have headings? What do they contribute?

Learning: Students discover information, develop hypotheses, and examine cross-cultural contrasts; in short, they go through the process of hypothesis refinement.

Integrating: Students begin to develop an awareness of and appreciation for the value system of C_2 by contrasting it with C_1. They reflect on and hypothesize about the norms and values of the C_2 in relation to C_1 and arrive at a broader understanding of culture.

Appendices A-D of Galloway's article provide detailed tasks for each of these stages. Of course the stages may be used not only with literary texts, but any text in another language.

Processes for Hypothesis Refinement

Seelye (1994) introduces the notion of hypothesis refinement as a means by which students may develop a properly grounded understanding of another culture. Later writers (Crawford-Lange and Lange, 1984; Allen and Lange, 1996) have extended the process so as to include affective factors and to integrate the learning of language and culture.

Do you think that your students would be satisfied by a process of culture learning that does not include a consideration of value systems and the development of a personal value system? Why?

Would they be satisfied to study the culture and talk about it without trying to use the target language during their explorations? Why?

Can you foresee any difficulties your students might have if you took them through the seven-step process for hypothesis refinement outlined by Crawford-Lange and Lange?

Consider the five strategies for information gathering described here: observation, artifacts, interviews, documents, and literary texts. Is/are any of these sources of information better suited to the Crawford-Lange and Lange hypothesis refinement process?

Can you think of other strategies for information gathering that are not discussed here? What are their advantages? Disadvantages? What do they contribute to the other five?

Assessing culture learning

Techniques for the testing the learning of culture as information are relatively well known. Valette (1977) shows several ways (identification, matching, short answer or short description, and multiple choice—to which true-false tests could be added) in which the testing of information on aspects of geography, cultural awareness, etiquette, and values can be achieved, *if* these cultural aspects are treated as knowledge or fact. The more difficult issue of assessing growth in the affective domain (perceiving or attending, responding, valuing, organization of values, characterization by a value system) are not treated in manuals on the testing of language (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Cohen, 1994). Alternative forms of assessment have to be considered for these purposes.

In his handling of assessment, Seelye (1994) considers the performances that are designed for end-of-course competencies as the key to any assessment, whether culture is taught as information or as process. In other words, if knowledge of geographical facts is an end-of-course competency, the well known forms of objective assessment can be used. If cultural awareness is an end-of-course competency, then it is up to the instructor (together with the students) to determine what aspects of awareness will be achieved and how students will be evaluated. The conditions under which such a course outcome is assessed include specific designation of the outcome, the conditions under which the outcome is to be demonstrated, and criteria by which the outcome is to be evaluated. Two examples will illustrate this approach to assessment:

Example 1

Outcome: Students are curious about the local importance of French culture.

Demonstration of outcome: After instruction on the importance of French influences in the world, students are given sources of basic information about French place names in their state. In small groups, they seek information on ten place names and each group reports back on its findings.

Evaluation criteria:
- completion of task (yes-no);
- quality of the information reported (defined scale of 1-5);
- perceptions of the importance of the information (defined scale 1-5); and
- student interest in the knowledge (Does it matter? defined scale 1-5).

Example 2

Outcome: Students recognize the value of gathering data as contributing to an appreciation of why a theme is important in a culture.

Demonstration of outcome: A group of students use hypothesis refinement to examine the theme "Alternative Medicine."

Evaluation criteria:
- the range of information found (the number of different sources used);
- the quality of the information or its contribution to the understanding of the theme (defined scale of 1-5);

- the change in perceptions as a result of more information (defined scale 1-5);
- student perceptions of the process (How does the process work? defined scale 1-5); and
- effect on student values (How have I [the student] changed? open-ended question).

The assessments in both examples do not specify right or wrong options, because in these cases there are no right or wrong answers. Instead, scaled options reflecting perceptions are used. The examples were chosen to specifically illustrate that since culture changes, since culture is variable from individual to individual, and since cultural perceptions are also variable, more flexible and open means of assessment are both necessary and appropriate.

In any case, outcomes for cultural learning need to be planned for both informational and process-oriented outcomes. In this planning, both objective testing and alternative forms of assessment play important roles. Here are some questions and activities to help you reflect on assessment of culture learning.

Assessment of Culture Learning

Describe a facts-oriented culture learning outcome. For each of the following types of objective test item, create a sample question to assess factual knowledge about the target culture: short answer, multiple choice, true-false, fill in the blank.

Describe a process-oriented culture learning outcome that you could use with your students. How will your students demonstrate the outcome? State three to four criteria that could be used to evaluate the outcome.

Treatment of Culture in Language Textbooks

This discussion of the treatment of culture in language learning materials examines three up-to-date college foreign language textbooks—one each in French, German, and Spanish. These books are representative of some of the current texts for the learning of foreign languages. Obviously, not all college texts are represented; these three were chosen simply because they were available. In the following discussion, the intent is not to judge the materials, but rather to describe how culture is treated, using the frame of reference established in earlier sections of this module.

Parallèles: Communication et culture

In the French example (Allen and Fouletier-Smith, 1995), culture is a major element of the text from the very first sentence in the preface to the organization of the materials themselves. The authors talk specifically about a "method for teaching culture and development of skills of cultural observation and analysis" (p. xvii). Each unit contains a section, "Parallèles," which is organized around observation (asking questions, gathering information) and reflection (reflection and analysis, using contrast and comparison with the students' own [U.S.] culture). Although the learning of language is not necessarily always an integral part of the cultural learning, of the three textbooks considered here, this one comes the closest to treating the learning of culture as a process of hypothesis refinement. The German and Spanish examples are more traditional in their approach.

Kontakte: A communicative approach

In the German text (Terrell, Tschirner, Nikolai, and Genzmer, 1992), the introduction for teachers indicates that there are "speaking situations" complemented by sections entitled "Kultur, "Landeskunde," and "Informationen," which provide students with cultural information. However, the introduction for students does not mention culture learning as an objective. Within the textbook, different pieces of information are presented (e.g., about health insurance, supermarkets, what to do in a restaurant, the Green Party) in a format that can be used for a variety of purposes, such as reading and listening. If anything is done actively with these materials in terms of culture learning, it is confined to asking and answering questions about the culture topic or maybe some application of the information contained in these isolated pieces to the life of the individual student. In its approach to the teaching of culture, this textbook basically relies on simply presenting cultural information.

Dos mundos

The basic focus of the Spanish example (Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, and Muñoz, 1994) is on teaching the language by means of a method call the Natural Approach. In the teacher's introduction, culture is mentioned as a contextual issue, but not as a major objective. In the students' introduction, culture is only hinted at or assumed as part of the learning content. In each unit, there is a section that presents information on "el mundo hispano." There are also reading selections which provide information about the Hispanic scene, or there are cultural notes. These sections are largely isolated from the remainder of the text. As in the German textbook, the basic manner in which the information is treated is through questions and answers, and the approach to the teaching of culture is the presentation of culture as information.

The following questions will help you to analyze textbooks for the teaching of your language to determine the approach that is used for the teaching of culture.

Treatment of Culture in Language Textbooks

Find two or three recently published textbooks for your language. (One of these could be the textbook from which you are currently teaching.) Examine the introduction of each book for the author's statement of objectives. Do the objectives (explicitly or implicitly) include culture learning?

If the cultural objectives are explicitly stated, do they present culture learning as a matter of gaining factual knowledge or as a process of developing and refining hypotheses about the culture?

What text structure contains activity on these cultural objectives? Where is this structure in the text? What activities does it contain? Do you think that the activities are likely to lead toward the author's stated cultural objectives? If not, how would you modify the activities to make them more attuned to the objectives?

Are the cultural sections of the textbook an integral part of the language learning program? If not, how can you modify the materials for a better integration of language and culture learning?

What techniques does the author use for assessing culture learning? Do you feel that these techniques are appropriate to the stated objectives? If not, how would you change the form of assessment to make it more appropriate?

Conclusion

This discussion has adopted a social sciences perspective on culture in order to expand the concept to encompass "the total way of life of [a] societal group" (Brooks, 1960, p. 80). This conceptualization includes material culture—from the most lowly product to the most refined, as well as value systems, ways of believing and behaving, shared knowledge, and more. Language is, of course, one aspect of culture and is the medium for understanding, sharing, and negotiating meaning for *all* aspects of culture.

There is enormous overlap in the research of the social sciences into the characteristics of language, the users of language, and the cultural milieux where the language is used to communicate. Thus the social sciences perspective not only allows us to broaden our view of culture, but also provides insights into the learning and use of language. The social sciences can help us understand how:

- language varies in form and use within its social and cultural contexts;
- society and its composition affect language development and behavior;

- culturally determined attitudes and individually experienced motivations can help or hinder the learning and use of the language;
- differences in culturally determined world views can cause culture shock, which in turn may have a telling impact on the learning of the language; and
- the culture of the classroom affects the language learning process.

The role and importance of the learning of culture in language courses have evolved in response to several trends. The growth of communicative approaches to the teaching of languages and the movement toward establishing content and performance standards for the learning of foreign languages have made the teaching of culture a requirement rather than a refinement. Another trend is seen in the increase in multidisciplinary studies of cultural areas. Language learning is enhanced by knowledge from other disciplines and language in turn becomes a major tool for learning new information.

The two principal approaches to selecting and teaching cultural content differ mainly in terms of a product versus process perspective. One approach treats cultural content as knowledge, focusing on facts and information about the culture. The other emphasizes exploration, analysis, and evaluation of features of the target culture. Regardless of the approach, just as for language learning, it is important to set goals and objectives for the learning of culture. For maximum effectiveness, the learning of language should be interwoven with the learning of culture. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) and Allen and Lange (1996) have shown how this may be done. Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (1996) show how learners can develop a cultural sensitivity that allows them to evaluate cultural differences from a multiple perspective and communicate constructively with members of another culture.

Techniques and strategies for the teaching of culture also reflect the product versus process distinction. Facts and information about a culture have traditionally been conveyed through lectures, a technique that casts students in a rather passive role. In contrast, devices such as culture capsules, culture clusters, cultural incidents and assimilators, and cultural minidramas require active participation from the students. Students may become even more involved if they are encouraged and guided to create these devices themselves. The strategy of hypothesis refinement can be a cognitive and affective process that permits integration of language and culture and requires active student participation. Students gather data by means of observation, study of cultural artifacts, interviews of representatives of the culture, and examination of documents and literary texts. They form hypotheses about the target culture, refine the hypotheses, and make comparisons and contrasts between the target culture and their own.

The importance of goals and objectives for culture learning is seen again in the approach to assessing culture learning. If culture learning has been approached through the learning of facts and information, students' grasp of such knowledge may be tested by well known item forms such as true-false, multiple choice, identification, short answer, and the like. The means of assessing the growth of cultural awareness and sensitivity are less well known and require a more open-ended and subjective approach. The teacher and students together can engage in defining the desired outcome of a process, stating the conditions under which the outcome is to be demonstrated, and devising criteria by which the outcome is to be evaluated.

In three recently published language textbooks examined within the frame of reference established here, one was found to treat the learning of culture as a process of hypothesis refinement; the other two rely on presenting culture as information to be learned. Evidence such as this makes it clear that the concept of culture learning in foreign language classrooms is still evolving. While teachers and students might wish for firmer guidelines and more supportive materials, this absence of *a priori* limits permits experimentation and innovation, with teachers and students working together to establish objectives, determine content, and evaluate outcomes. Since culture learning involves the intellect in both cognitive and affective development, teachers and learners can all grow as they jointly explore their own and another culture.

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